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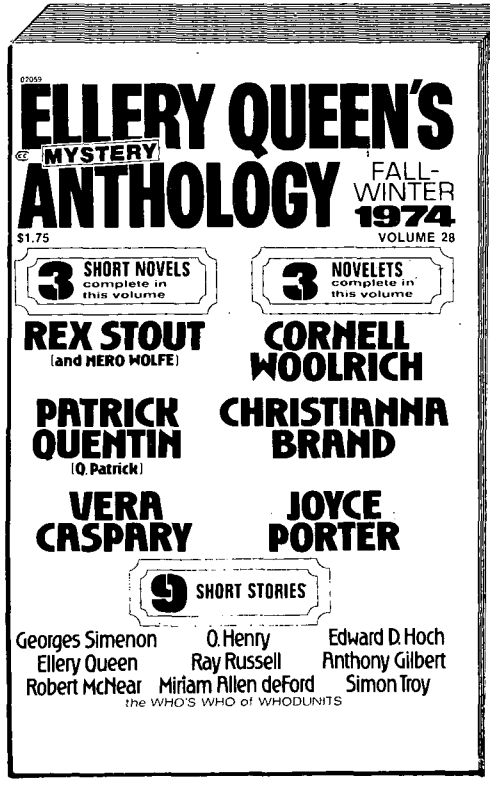

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The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

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by John B. Haikey

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a *NEW* Jericho story by

HUGH PENTECOST

Another adventure in crime and detection of John Jericho, the red-bearded Viking of a man, the painter whose canvases crusaded against man's inhumanity to man and whose empathy for the underdog made him a relentless pursuer of the truth . . . Jericho met Toby Nelson, a foreign correspondent, in a trench under attack by an Egyptian airplane. She disappeared quickly from his life, only to pop up seven years later —again for a brief interlude. Jericho was unlucky both times.

JERICHO AND THE UNKNOWN LOVER

by HUGH PENTECOST

She had said it to him twice, once long ago during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and once last night. He had regretted the necessity for it both times.

She had said in effect, both times, "We're just not lucky, dear Johnny. It would be wonderful fun to make love to you, but unhappily I am a one-man-at-a-time woman."

He would never forget the first time they had met. An Egyptian plane had been flying low over the desert, spraying everything in sight with its machine guns. Jericho had taken a dive into a trench dug by the Israeli troops and befor he could right himself someon landed on top of him. To hi amazement it turned out to b a girl, her face, her turned-u nose smudged with dirt.

"Sorry, but I couldn't wait t be invited," she said, and ble an errant strand of hair out o her eyes.

"What the hell are you doin out here?" Jericho asked.

"I'm Toby Nelson," she sai as though that explained every thing. She was wearing slack and an Israeli uniform jacke that was too large for he Chestnut-red hair billowe

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own over her shoulders. She ıust have been wearing a cap, ut she'd lost it in the dive for ıfety.

The plane had passed over, ut it was making a turn for nother run over the area. As it pproached, Jericho, who was x-feet-four inches tall and 240 ounds of bone and muscle, cov-red 110 pounds of girl with is body. Bullets ripped into ıe sandbags at the top of the ·ench and the plane flew way.

"Your beard is tickling my eck," the girl said in a casual oice. He had a flaming red eard that made him look like n ancient Viking warrior.

He disentangled himself. 'ou all right?" he asked.

"I'm fine," she said, and gain blew the hair out of her ·es. "Do you happen to have a garette? I left mine in the ep." She gestured toward the ep which was burning merrily few yards away, a score for ıe plane.

So it began that way. Some-ıe gave them a ride back to a earby town. He learned, in its and pieces, that she was overing the war for a news-aper syndicate. She pretended be hurt that "Toby Nelson" idn't mean anything to him. fter all, she knew who John ericho was—an artist whose aintings of the horrors of war spoke, perhaps even more vividly than words, about man's inhumanity to man.

For a few days at the front they worked together. In the evenings they drank and talked and admired each other. It was perfectly reasonable that two such vital people should have thought of something more intimate. That was when she first said it.

"I almost wish I wasn't a one-man-at-a-time girl, Johnny," she said. They were sitting together in a little café, drinking a special Greek brandy —Metaxa 5 Star—which she professed to be mad for.

"Who is he?" Jericho asked, feeling sorry for himself.

"A Lieutenant in the Israeli Air Force," Toby said. "Joseph Freed. You'd like him, Johnny."

Her assignment took her away a couple of days later and he didn't see her again. He made an effort to find her the day he saw Joseph Freed's name on the casualty lists, but she seemed to have disappeared. They were like ships that have passed in the night.

And so it was that seven years later he was driving along a highway in Connecticut when he came to a stop light. He pulled up parallel to another car and turned his head casually to look at the driver. Toby Nelson!

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He let out a great bellowing noise and she waved excitedly, and when the light permitted they moved on and pulled up at the side of the road. They embraced and he whirled her around and they both talked at once. It seemed she had rented a cottage for the summer not a mile from where they were. If he wasn't hurrying to get somewhere—?

"I've been hurrying to get to you for seven years," Jericho said.

She gave him an odd little smile and even then he thought he got the message. He was too late again.

Her cottage looked out over a lake, and they sat on the terrace and watched a little white boat with a red sail zigzagging in the bright sun. They talked about Israel and the new war and the incredible state of the world in general. She had come to this little town of Winfield to write a book about the Middle East. And then she told him.

"We're just not lucky, dear Johnny. I'm still a one-man-at-a-time girl." She frowned. "This time I've gotten into something I always swore would never happen. The man is married. That's why I chose Winfield as a place to work for the summer. He lives here."

That was all she said about it. He could have gone on, of course. But she was fun to b with, and somehow he sense that she needed someone wh wasn't involved in a compli cated triangle. They swam an lay in the sun together an talked and laughed. There wa only one more mention of th married man. He would not b visiting today or tonight. An so Jericho stayed for charcoal-broiled steak and a terward they drank some that Greek brandy.

"It's hard to find in this cou try," Toby said, "but I got th local liquor-store man to stoc some for me."

He felt, suddenly, uncontro lably sleepy. It was time to go.

"If you'd like to stay in th guest room—knowing the co ditions, Johnny dear—you' welcome."

He stayed, and slept as he'd been pole-axed. When h woke the sun was pouring i the windows of his room. H had, perhaps, the most terrib hangover he could ever r member. It didn't make sens Two bourbons before dinne two brandies after. He glanc at his wrist watch. It was ni o'clock. He never slept beyo 6:30 in the morning.

He got up, feeling heav headed, showered and dresse He went out into the main pa of the cottage. No sign of Tob No coffee in the pot in t

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kitchen. He went to the door of her room and knocked. When she didn't answer he opened the door.

"Dear God!" he whispered.

She was there on the bed, naked, a mass of blood and torn flesh. He didn't have to go to her to know that she had been brutally murdered.

Jericho had faced violence in a dozen different shapes and forms in his life. He had covered wars and the holocausts of Nature and assassinations and murders. His inevitable reaction was a kind of fierce anger against the utter senselessness of it all. But as he stood in the doorway of Toby Nelson's bedroom he felt a cold sick horror, not because he had been especially fond of her but because he had been in the next room while someone had hacked her to death and he had heard nothing, had done nothing to save her.

He remembered when he had gone to bed, unexpectedly drowsy, that he had been able to hear her moving around in the next room. The wall separating the two rooms was thin. It was inconceivable that this kind of violence could have happened and he had heard nothing. Yet that was the way it was—he had heard not a sound.

He took a step into the room. The weapon, which must have been some kind of knife, was not visible anywhere. His brain, coming out of shock, began to tick with logical precision. There was no way, drunk or sober, he could have slept through what had happened here. He couldn't have been drunk on two bourbons and two brandies taken over a period of about three hours. That was normal consumption or less for a social evening.

That damned Greek brandy! He had loathed the taste of it but he hadn't wanted to tell Toby because she thought it was so special. He turned to walk out of the room and stopped. On the headboard of her bed, etched in blood, was a large clear thumbprint. The murderer had left his signature behind.

He was on his way to the phone in the living room when he glanced at the couch where he and Toby had been sitting just before they had decided to turn in. They had left the bottle of Metaxa 5 Star and the two brandy glasses on the low coffee table in front of the couch. Neither the bottle nor the glasses were there now.

Frowning, Jericho walked into the kitchen. Toby could have come out of her room later to put the glasses away. The plates and the silverware they'd used at dinner were still on the

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drainboard, unwashed, along with the highball glasses they'd used before dinner. But no brandy glasses.

He remembered he'd got them out of a corner cupboard for her. There had been six of the bell-shaped glasses on a shelf, and there were six of them there now. Toby—or someone—had washed the two glasses they'd used and put them back.

He opened the door to the liquor cabinet. There were bourbon and gin and vodka and Scotch and a square bottle of Cointreau, but no brandy. No Metaxa 5 Star or any other brandy. He remembered that the Metaxa bottle was nearly full when they'd poured their first round the night before. It should be somewhere now, about three-quarters full. But he couldn't find it anywhere.

He went to the telephone to call the State Police, knowing for certain what had happened to him, knowing why his mouth tasted dry and bitter, why his head ached. The brandy he had drunk had been drugged. That was why he had slept through a murder.

It wasn't sensible to suppose that Toby Nelson had drugged him so that she could be killed without his interference.

An impersonal voice on the phone told Jericho to stay where he was.

He put down the phone and found himself looking down at the top of Toby's desk. The telephone numbers of the State Police and the Fire Department were written on a small card in Toby's neat script and the card was stuck in the corner of her blotter pad. Somewhere not too far away there was a man who would be shocked, almost beyond endurance, by what had happened here. He was a married man whom Toby had loved. Somewhere in the cottage there might be letters from him, his name in an address book, a telephone number that could be identified by the troopers. Toby would want him protected. She had loved him enough to orient her life around him.

He stood very still, turning a page in his mind. Suppose this man might not be shocked at all when the news reached him? Suppose he had been fed up? Suppose Toby had threatened some sort of security his marriage supplied? Suppose she had made demands of him that he couldn't or wouldn't meet? It could be that this nameless man needed prosecution, not protection.

A police siren sounded not far off. The State Police had been prompt. Jericho's muscles tensed. He knew that the

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Number One Suspect in the first phase of this investigation was going to be John Jericho.

The two troopers who walked in the front door were quite different and yet quite alike. They both had that cool, impersonal, professional look to them. Trooper Allen was young, playing a role, Jericho thought. Lieutenant Busick was older, a big man tanned a mahogany brown, with a touch of gray at his temples, with cold blue eyes partly hidden behind slightly tinted gold-rimmed glasses.

Jericho took them to the door of Toby's bedroom. Young Allen muttered something under his breath. Busick looked at the dead woman coldly, dispassionately.

"Your name?" Busick asked Jericho.

"John Jericho."

"Address?"

"Jefferson Mews in New York City—Manhattan."

Young Allen took down the answers in a notebook, happy to turn away from the body on the bed.

"You found her?" Busick asked.

"Yes."

"When?"

"When I got up," Jericho said.

Busick's eyes flickered behind the glasses. "Got up?"

"I spent the night in that bedroom next door." Jericho drew a deep breath. "The first thing you will find it hard to believe is that I slept through what happened in here."

"You have to be kidding," Busick said.

"It may not be accurate to say I slept. I think I was drugged."

"How?"

"We drank some brandy after dinner. We'd spent the afternoon on the lake and out in the sun. We both felt, suddenly, very sleepy. I woke up with a splitting headache and a mouth that tasted like the bottom of a birdcage. That was at nine o'clock. I came out here when I was dressed to find Miss Nelson and some coffee. I knocked on her door and when she didn't answer I opened it. It was the way you see it. I haven't touched anything."

"You think the brandy was drugged?"

"Yes."

"So let's check it out."

"Impossible," Jericho said. "Someone washed the snifters we used and the brandy is gone. It was a bottle of a Greek brandy called Metaxa 5 Star, three-quarters full when we went to bed."

"In separate rooms?"

"Yes."

Busick's mouth was a thin straight slit. "I think I'd better

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advise you of your rights, Mr. Jericho."

"I know my rights," Jericho said. "When you've had a chance to do a rundown on me you may be more inclined to believe what I'm telling you. That will take time, however, and there may be a quick way to make what I say a little more credible. There is a bloody thumbprint there on the headboard of her bed. Lift it. Take my prints. Take Miss Nelson's prints. You'll find there was a third person here last night."

The two troopers looked at the bloody thumbprint. Young Allen went out to the car to get the equipment to deal with it.

"How do you suggest I start a rundown on you, Jericho?" Busick asked.

"Call Lieutenant Pascal of the Homicide Squad in Manhattan. He's an old friend."

"So while we check these prints," Busick said, "suppose you begin at the beginning."

"It began seven years ago in Israel," Jericho said. He began with the trench in the desert and carried on to the traffic light on the Connecticut road. He told about an afternoon and evening, old friends glad to see each other. Then he hesitated for a moment. "There is something I think I have to tell you, Lieutenant. It's rather personal, but it may be very important. Miss Nelson and I are —were—good healthy normal people. I spent my nights when I knew her in Israel in other bedrooms than hers because she was involved with an Israeli pilot. She was what she called a 'one-man-at-a-time' woman. I spent last night in that other bedroom because she was still a one-man-at-a-time woman. There is a man here in Winfield."

"Who?" Busick asked.

"I have no idea. I do know that he's married."

"How do you know that?"

"Toby told me."

"She told you that, but not his name?"

"That fingerprint may reveal it to you."

"It could have been a tramp, a hopped-up creep who just stumbled in on you," Busick said.

"Who drugged the brandy in advance, washed the glasses afterwards, and went off with the brandy bottle?"

"Could be."

"If he drank what was in that bottle he's either asleep or dead somewhere," Jericho said.

Busick was methodical and efficient. Young Allen knew his job with the fingerprints. Jericho pressed his thumbs on an ink pad and Allen also took Toby's prints. While this was going on an ambulance arrived

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with the local medical officer. Two other troopers appeared. The medical man guessed that Toby had been stabbed to death with something like a carving or butcher knife. There was no such knife in the cottage. Troopers began making a methodical search of the grounds outside.

"I suggest you have them keep an eye out for a bottle of Metaxa 5 Star," Jericho said.

Busick gave him a cold look. He wasn't a man who relished suggestions, but he passed on the order. He involved himself in a search for an address book or a list of telephone numbers. If there was a man in Winfield there should be some record of him.

"He didn't keep any personal things here," Busick said at one point. "No razor or clothes or even a bathrobe or dressing gown. Maybe she invented him, Jericho, to keep from shacking up with you."

"She was much too straightforward to play games," Jericho said.

Trooper Allen reported. The bloody fingerprint was not Jericho's or Toby Nelson's. There had been a third person in the murder room and from the size of the print it must have been a man.

Busick seemed to relax a little. He gave Jericho a tight smile. "That makes it possible to begin to believe you a little," he said.

"Thanks."

"We'll match the print against our State Police records," Busick said. "Send it on to the F.B.I. That will take some time."

"Meanwhile the guy is somewhere within whistling distance," Jericho said.

The eyes behind Busick's tinted glasses narrowed. "Assuming there *is* a boy friend here in Winfield," he said, "does it necessarily follow that he's the killer? It could have been someone else who resented the relationship."

"The wife?"

"That fingerprint is a man's," Busick said. He turned his head, his face stony. The ambulance people were carrying out Toby's body on a stretcher. "Some other boy friend? A jealous one? Can you suggest someone who fits that, Jericho?"

"I don't know anything about Toby's private life for the last seven years. The man she was in love with when I first met her was killed in the Middle East war. Seven years later, yesterday, she told me she was having an affair with a married man who lives here in Winfield. Period."

"We'll find him," Busick said. "I'd appreciate it if you'd come

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down to the barracks and make a full statement. Then you're free to go."

"I'm not going anywhere," Jericho said, his voice angry, "until we run the man who did this through the nearest meat chopper."

In the bleak State Police barracks Jericho dictated a statement on tape and then waited restlessly for the police stenographer to transcribe it so that he could sign it. How could he, a stranger in town, go about locating Toby's lover? There could be gossip in a small town like this, but how would a stranger get to hear it? That was an avenue open to Busick.

Facing a whitewashed hallway, Jericho put together a theory. The truth was he hadn't known Toby very well or how she would behave in an emotional situation. Perhaps she had put unbearable pressure on her man to break up his marriage. Perhaps she had threatened to go to the man's wife and for some reason the man couldn't face that. He had to be rid of her, in spite of the fact that he loved her. But he couldn't face her in cold blood and do away with her.

Knowing Toby's habits and that she drank some of the Metaxa every night after dinner, the killer had poisoned the bottle in her liquor cabinet. Later in the evening she would be unconscious from the drug and he could kill her, without reproaches from her, making it look like the senseless violence of—what had Busick suggested?—a hopped-up creep. What a shock it must have been to him to arrive at the cottage and find another person, Jericho, passed out in the next room! But he had known Jericho wouldn't wake up.

But why wash the glasses and take away the bottle? The drugged brandy would, of course, do away with the hopped-up creep theory. It would show advance planning. He had had to get rid of the bottle, hoping Jericho wouldn't guess why he had slept through it all. As it stood now there was no proof the brandy had been drugged. There was only Jericho's headache and his conviction about it. By now, even if the bottle was found, the killer would surely have washed away all evidence of a drug before he discarded the bottle. The killer was safe in spite of the unexpected presence of Jericho.

Busick appeared in the hallway. The statement was ready to sign.

"The computer turns up nothing on that fingerprint in our local records," he told Jericho.

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"It will take a while to hear from the F.B.I."

"We've got plenty of time," Jericho said.

After Jericho signed the statement he drove his red Mercedes into town. It was early afternoon when he stopped in the local sandwich shop for some coffee and a hamburger. The word about the murder was out, and while he was finishing his second coffee a breathless young man from the local weekly newspaper caught up with him. Jericho, it seemed, was already a local celebrity—the man who had slept through a murder.

Jericho had his own questions to ask. Who in town had got to know Toby Nelson? What friends had she made? Someone, somewhere must have made a connection between the foreign correspondent who had rented the cottage on the lake and a married couple in town.

But as the afternoon dragged on and he asked questions in a dozen places no one had an answer. Toby had kept strictly to herself. She had given no parties and gone to no parties. Jericho remembered that Toby had told him she'd come to Winfield because her man was here, which implied that she had met him somewhere else. In any case, there seemed to be no trail to pick up in Winfield.

Twilight was closing in when he found himself opposite the local liquor store. An idea struck him and he parked his car and went into the store.

It was a small one-man operation, the proprietor professionally cheerful. Jericho saw the sign on the window that said "Paul Johnston, Permitee." He ordered a fifth of Jack Daniels, then proceeded to look around the shelves behind the counter.

"I'm looking for a specially nice brandy to give someone as a gift," he said.

Mr. Johnson grinned. "Price no object?"

"No object."

"Because I have an unusual Greek brandy here that I can recommend," Johnston said. He reached down under the counter and came up with a fifth of Metaxa 5 Star.

"I'll be damned," Jericho said. "I haven't seen any of that for years. Used to drink it when I was doing a job in Egypt some time back."

"I ordered it for a special customer who won't be needing it any more," Johnston said. "You just passing through, Mister?"

"You could say that."

"This customer was a lady," Johnston said. "Somebody murdered her last night. She won't be wanting this Metaxa any more."

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"I know about Miss Nelson," Jericho said. "I'm the man who was sleeping in the next room."

Johnston's eyes almost popped out of his head. "Holy cow!" he said.

"Look, Mr. Johnston, Miss Nelson was an old friend of mine. So far Lieutenant Busick has drawn a blank. I'm interested in finding out who her friends were here in Winfield and if there was any gossip about her and some man."

"Never heard a thing about her, good or bad," Johnston said. "She was a writer, the way I heard it. Kept pretty much to herself. If she had friends in town I never heard who they were. They say you never heard what happened last night at the cottage. Passed out, they say. Mind you, I don't criticize a good drinking bout now and then. How could I in this business?" His laughter was about as feeble as the joke.

"I'll tell you about it sometime," Jericho said. "Right now I'm interested in her friends, if any. I thought someone might have given her a present. A friend would know how fond she was of this Metaxa and bought her a bottle."

Johnston shook his head. "I had it out on the shelf for a while but I guess the price scared people off," he said. "Would you believe I only sold one bottle except what Miss Nelson bought each week?"

Jericho fought to sound casual. "Who did you sell it to?"

Johnston laughed. "Won't do you much good, I guess. I sold it to Dan Busick a couple of days ago."

Jericho felt his jaw muscles stiffen. "Lieutenant Busick?"

"Yeah, Dan Busick."

"He asked for it or did he just happen to see it on the shelf?"

"Neither one," Johnston said. "You see, yesterday was Sally's birthday."

"Who is Sally?"

"Dan's wife," Johnston said. "Sally's old family here in Winfield—the Hadleys. I grew up with her. Old man Hadley owned half the town. So Dan wanted to buy her something special—an expensive liqueur or brandy."

"And he asked for the Metaxa?"

"No." Johnston laughed. "I guess you could say I conned him into buying it. You see, Miss Nelson rented the Larkin cottage for three months. She asked me to get some Metaxa for her. I bought two cases from my wholesaler, but at the rate she was buying I figured I might be overstocked. So when Dan asked for something special I decided I'd try to unload a fifth on him."

"And he went for it?"

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"Yeah, on my recommendation he bought it. That's the only one I ever sold. I guess that won't help you very much."

"I guess not," Jericho said very quietly. "By the way, where do the Busicks live?"

"Take your right at the traffic light down the street. About a mile beyond you'll see a big stone house set back from the road. That's the place Sally inherited from her old man."

"Thanks for passing the time of day, Mr. Johnston."

"My pleasure. I hope you and Dan find the one who did it. She was a nice lady."

Jericho went out and climbed into his car. He felt a cold finger run down his spine. He was asking himself a question. If Mr. Johnston hadn't come up with the bottle of Metaxa would Busick eventually have asked for it?

The stone house beyond the traffic light was impressive. His tires made a luxurious sound on the bluestone semicircular driveway. As he approached the front of the house he saw a high-priced foreign sports car parked by the door. A tall, rather handsome blonde woman in her late forties, wearing garden gloves, was pruning a rosebush by the side of the house.

Jericho pulled up beside her and turned off his motor.

"Mrs. Busick?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Busick." It was a pleasant, husky, cultivated voice.

"My name is Jericho, Mrs. Busick. I'm looking for your husband."

Little crow's-feet contracted at the corners of her bright blue eyes. "You're the man who—who was in the Nelson woman's cottage," she said.

"Unfortunately."

"Dan's still on duty," she said. "Have you tried the barracks?"

"He's evidently out on the road somewhere," Jericho said vaguely. He smiled. "It's a little late to wish you a happy birthday."

"How—how did you know that I—"

"Small-town gossip," Jericho said. He sounded almost too cheerful. "I was looking for a special brandy in the liquor store. Your Mr. Johnston told me your husband had bought you a bottle of Metaxa 5 Star for your birthday."

She smiled a very thin smile. "I'm afraid you've let the cat out of the bag, Mr. Jericho. Because Dan was on duty last night we're celebrating my birthday tonight—if this Nelson case doesn't interfere. The brandy must be a surprise he intends for dinner tonight."

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"Sorry I let it slip," Jericho said. "If the Lieutenant checks in here will you tell him I'm anxious to see him? I'm going back to the Nelson cottage to have a look around. I have the feeling we must have missed something."

"I'll tell him, Mr. Jericho."

Jericho watched her in his rear-view mirror as he drove down the bluestone. She was staring after him, standing straight and still. He wondered how much she knew. Could she possibly guess that last night her husband had killed his mistress because he couldn't give up this beautiful home, the expensive car, his status in the community? Because that was what Jericho believed as he turned out of the big stone gates.

Busick had never meant the brandy as a gift to her. He had drugged that bottle, switched it with the one in Toby's liquor cabinet when Toby was away from the cottage, waited for her to follow her after-dinner custom of drinking it, and come in the middle of the night to kill her. He had found Jericho sleeping there and risked it anyway, knowing how potent the drug was.

He had made only one slip, Jericho thought. The thumbprint on the headboard was almost certainly his. But how much of a slip was it? Busick was in charge of the investigation. His fingerprints were certainly on file, but he could cover that.

There was one other hope. An autopsy would show traces of the drug in Toby's system. Was there a way Busick could cover that, too?

Jericho reached Toby's cottage and parked his car. The woods around the cottage were dark and still, the last faint reflection of the lost day showing only on the lake. Jericho was certain that if Sally Busick gave her husband an account of his visit, the Lieutenant would come, wondering just how close to the truth Jericho was.

At last the darkness was total and Jericho felt his tension mounting. Busick must always have come here after dark. Everyone in town knew him. He couldn't have risked coming here openly. So he would come now, the night hi ally.

Jericho turned on a couple o lamps in the living room. Then he wandered out onto the ter race overlooking the lake which was streaked with silve from the new moon.

"Come on! Let's get it ove with, buster!" he said aloud.

The shot rang loud and clea and a bullet split the cottag

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paneling not inches from Jericho's head. He started an instinctive dive away and at the same moment was knocked violently off his feet by someone who literally climbed on his back. He found himself struggling to get free from a bear-hug embrace.

"For God's sake stay down!"

It was Busick who was wrestling with him.

For a moment they held each other, faces close together in the moonlight.

"I didn't shoot at you," Busick said. "I wasn't ten feet away! I don't miss at ten feet. Now stay down while I take a look."

Somehow it was believable. The trooper's gun was in its holster. Jericho loosened his grip on Busick's powerful arms and the trooper rose slowly to a crouching position. He moved, still crouching, to the terrace wall. Then slowly he stood up.

The rifle cracked from not too far away and the bullet hit Busick squarely in the chest. From off toward the lake Jericho heard something that sounded like a cry of pain, and then the sound of someone hurrying off through the brush. He started to follow but when he reached Busick he changed his mind. It was a terrible wound in the trooper's chest and he was coughing blood.

Jericho had had experience with wounds. One look told him this needed more skills and equipment than he had.

"Lie still. I'll get help," he said.

Busick reached out and his hand closed over Jericho's wrist like a steel vise. "Forget it," he said in a choked voice. A little river of blood ran out of the corner of his mouth. "It—it's better this way. I—I drove her to it."

"Your wife?"

Busick laughed, a strange gurgling sound. "I taught her to shoot," he said.

"She was after me," Jericho said.

"She missed, so she wasn't after you," Busick said. "I had betrayed her. She wanted me to come out in the open and I guess I knew it. I had to pay for it all. You see, she killed Toby last night. I bought the bottle of Metaxa, not for Sally's birthday but for Toby. Sally found it and it was a kind of—a kind of clincher. She drugged it —switched bottles—and waited. Then she came here and—and had her revenge. When you talked to her today she must have known the game was up."

"The fingerprint?" Jericho asked. "It was a man's print."

"Mine," Busick said. "When I found Sally missing last night I guessed what was happening. I

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thought she'd come here to—to confront Toby—to scream and yell and threaten. I—I didn't dream—"

He twisted with pain as choking stopped him.

"Take it easy," Jericho said gently.

"I—I came here and found Toby—and you. I tried to see if there was some way to help Toby. I touched her and saw that there was nothing I could do. That accounts for the bloody print. I was sure Sally had done it, but I—I felt guilty myself. I couldn't give up all that went with Sally, but I loved Toby. Now—now I've killed them both."

"Your wife will have to be arrested and charged," Jericho said.

"I tell you I killed them both!" Busick said. "Because Sally will be dead when you find her. The rest of the poison, or a gun barrel in her mouth. Full—full circle."

The grip on Jericho's wrist relaxed and Busick turned his head away with a last struggling gasp for breath.

A faint breeze blew in off the lake and to Jericho it felt like the first chill of winter.

"Q"

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

V. C. Stabile
Vice President and Treasurer

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". . . reminiscing nostalgically about the good old days of our youth when Crime was committed by people who followed the Rules, and Detection and the Writing of it were conducted by Gentlemen and Ladies" . . .

THE GREAT DETECTIVE'S LAST CASE

by MAJOR DOMO (pseud.)

"Most people," said the Great Detective, "don't have butlers any more. It makes the Business of Detection (he spoke in Capital Letters) much more difficult. Before the War (he didn't say which war) everything was simple: I'd find a clue—ash from a Turkish cigarette or Havana cigar was always good—and I'd say, 'The Butler did it!'; and the butler would break down and make a full confession like a good fellow, or perhaps he'd throw himself from a high window and splatter himself all over the pavement below; that usually cleaned up everything except the pavement.

"The Butler was always somebody like the disguised, disreputable, disinherited, long-lost half brother of the victim, which provided a good, simple, understandable motive and didn't bring in confusing concepts like Social Justice, World Politics, or Sex. And he used an antique letter opener or a blunt instrument, nothing complicated.

"Oh, yes, Holmes and the others got something exotic once in a while—the Adventure of the Speckled Band, for example, or something in a Locked Room—but for me, it was Butlers and Bludgeons most of the time. Yes, things were simpler then."

"Yes," said I, "the Writer's Trade was simpler then, too. A hero was something more than a loaf of Italian bread stuffed with prosciutto, provalone, and peppers. We had heroes then—brilliant amateurs, aristocrats. The professionals, contrary to what a lady said in another context, are driving the amateurs out of business. Today it's all cops and cabdriv-

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ers; the times are ugly, and the hansom days are over.

"Why, you hardly ever even see a pince-nez any more! And the class of criminals I get to write about today—rapists, pornographic photographers, photographic pornographers (which may or may not be the same thing), crooked cops and dishonest politicians! Where are the Amateur Cracksmen with their delicate fingertips and the high-born Emerald Thieves with their impeccable evening attire? Gone, all gone! Had I but known, I'd have stuck to my medical practice."

We sat in the Great Man's Library drinking our postprandial Port as was our wont, I before the roaring fire, he at his desk. He toyed idly with an antique, jade-handled letter opener, and I watched the play of the firelight on the fan of old swords and pistols which hung high on the wall opposite the hearth. It is true that in Literature, as opposed to Life, an Author may never mention weapons on the wall if he doesn't intend to use them later on (Fair Play to the Reader, one of the Rules of Good Taste which is considered old-fashioned today).

But this is Life, and in this instance, the blades of the swords were welded together to maintain their decorative arrangement, and the pistols, purchased for the Great Man from a barrow in Portobello by a young interior designer of good breeding and manners, were without firing pins. Ornaments at best and blunt instruments at worst, and besides, who would take the trouble to climb the wall to get them when there were perfectly adequate heavy brass fire tools ready at hand beside the fire?

I mention them only to indicate the rather baronial atmosphere of the room and can assure the Reader that neither he nor anyone else will be troubled by swords or pistols now or in the future. The fire irons, Dear Reader, need cause you no concern either.

("Dear Reader": I use the phrase out of habit alone.)

We sat, as I have said, surrounded by the Great Detective's books, among which were a few modest works of my own detailing his Signal Achievements in the Battle Against Crime. These small histories were written (as this piece is; a doctor should not seek publicity) pseudonymously as by Major Domo: Major because in the early days of my practice in India that was my rank in the Bengal Lancets, and Domo because (despite its alien sound; I am an Englishman, and that is the source of my greatest

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pride) it seems to fit in several ways for reasons I shall make clear later.

There were also chronicles of the fastidious M. Dupin, the admirable Father Brown, and the estimable Mr. Philo Vance, and a whole shelf on the Triumphs of the magnificent Mr. Holmes by the amiable and excellent Dr. Watson, with whom, I flatter myself, I have some accomplishments in common. There were dossiers on Raffles and Valentine, Lupin and the Saint, sinners with style, all of them. There were cases by Miss Christie and Mr. Carr and by M'Lord Dunsany and by Miss Sayers.

There were memoirs of Mr. Queen, who seems to have been reared as a gentleman even though his father was on the Force. (By the way, does anyone know the name and ancestry of Mr. Queen's *mother*?) There were even some arcane oddities by a Dr. Watney about the cases of a Mr. Homes. (Both these names strike some sort of chord in my memory. I must do some research; there may be something fishy about them.) Still it was a distinguished company. Gentlemen and Ladies all, and I was proud to be part of it.

It was, in short, the Library of a Gentleman, by and about Gentlemen—and Ladies. An Author in such a Library might conceivably call a shovel a spade if it had a straight edge but would never think of giving so crude a name to his Detective Character... Spade, Hammer—workingmen's tools; Wimsey, Merrivale, with their connotations of idleness, these are the names (and the titles that go with them: Lord Peter, Sir Henry) of the Brilliant Dilettante, the Incomparable Amateur, the Great Detective.

We sat, as I have had occasion to say twice before, in the Library of the Great Detective, enjoying our postprandial Port and reminiscing nostalgically about the good old days of our youth when Crime was committed by people who followed the Rules, and Detection and the Writing of it were conducted by Gentlemen and Ladies.

The Great Man filled our glasses. "To the Butler!" he said sentimentally. "The Butler did it! That's the ticket! I have earned my reputation by giving one simple elementary answer to a whole series of complex questions: 'The Butler did it!' It has served us well. You and I, old friend, have made our careers on those four words: 'The Butler did it!' To the Butler!" We drank.

He filled our glasses once more and said, "There will be no more Port after dinner for

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the two of us. This is my Last Case. In fact, it's my Last Bottle. Besides, I've signed an exclusive as-told-to contract with a tough private-eye writer from the States, Mickey Something-or-Oth—"

I put down my Havana and picked up the antique, jade-handled letter opener from the desk before him and plunged it into his heart. A look of intense concentration spread across his features. "Butler—did—it!" he gasped, and smiled and died.

I should have loved to record for Posterity his Final Triumph in the Art of Detection, his instinctive, almost reflexive, naming of his murderer even before he knew he was to be murdered and, for that matter, even after he had been. The consistency of the man! But alas, this manuscript will never see a publisher (and vice versa) and I fear that I must allow this Last Success of the Great Detective to pass into history unsolved.

You understand my predicament, don't you, Dear Reader? (That habit again.) You understand that the simple brilliance and brilliant simplicity and, above all, the steadfast consistency of the Great Man's Final Solution make it impossible for me, I being who I am, to make this matter public? No? Well, then, I'll explain.

No matter how shrewdly I altered the motives and circumstances of this case, I could not possibly disguise my own participation in it. One fact would still lead to me. Inevitably. You see, Major Domo, as I have said before, is only a pseudonym, a clever pseudonym, perhaps the only truly clever thing I ever thought of. It combines three elements: my past rank, the meaning of my real last name, and initials which stand for my present profession, M.D. I might add that the Great Detective always called me by my real name which is—R. Gordon Butler, M.D.

Butler did it! Elementary, my Dear Reader.

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a *NEW* Chick Kelly story by

S. S. RAFFERTY

Chick Kelly, the standup comic who owns a little night club in the Big Apple, gets hit with a whopper of a lawsuit that will wipe him out. So once again Chick has to make like a dick, this time to save himself from bankruptcy . . . Show 'em, Chick!

PRESS ON, CHICK!

by S. S. RAFFERTY

Jack McCarthy, my kitchen manager, always called him the "bug inspector" because Jack considered the routine Department of Health inspection an insult to his abilities. Jack is Mr. Clean about himself, and Mr. Antiseptic about my little night club. The "bug inspector" comes in once a month regularly, and also on occasional spot checks to see if we are living up to City regulations. Our inspector is Dom Gillette, who is tough but fair.

I thought it was another spot check when Dom waltzed in with another guy right after the lunch crowd had thinned out. I gave Dom the nod from the bar where I was going over some bills and was surprised when he came over to me. He usually deals directly with McCarthy.

When he said, "'Lo, Mr. Kelly" and not "Chick," I figured he was either trying to impress the young blond guy with him, or something was wrong. I happened to be right on both counts.

He introduced his partner as Dr. David Cohen of the State Department of Health. They wanted to palaver in private, so I took them back to the office and had McCarthy step in, too.

"First, Mr. Kelly," Dr. Cohen says, taking a sheaf of papers out of his briefcase, "I'm afraid we are going to have to close your place. Now don't get upset, it will only be overnight, or until we get all the samples and run our analyses."

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"Somehow, Doc, I think I came in at the middle. Can you rerun the opening scenes?"

"Then you don't know?"

I was beginning to wonder what kind of doctor he was, and if he was any good at it.

"A Mrs. Philip Stoner, thirty-six, of this city, died last night of poisoning after eating in your restaurant."

"Ptomaine!" Jack shouted. "Ptomaine in my kitchen?"

"Ptomaine is a rather vague name for any kind of food poisoning. In Mrs. Stoner's case it was a toxemia of the botulant category. I went over the autopsy record this morning. The toxic substance seems to have been in fish tissue. Her husband tells us that she had a fish dish here last night —calamari."

Deep inside my mind I am planning a murder. The victim will be Guido LaSalle, my head chef. My place is a steak, chops, and roast beef place, but every now and then Guido gets depressed with the menu and tries to add some fancy stuff. It's a question of honor, he tells me. So I let him put squid in tomato sauce on the evening card. His honor, my foot!

"Doctor, couldn't this lady have eaten something somewhere else—even at home?"

"That's logical, Mr. Kelly, but impossible. We have interviewed Mr. Stoner and a Mr. Jerome Smith, who was with them all day and had dinner with them here. Both maintain that she had eaten nothing since breakfast, and the autopsy confirms that. We took it a step further and located the cab driver who drove them from your door to the Stoners' residential hotel. They made no stops along the way. Their maid did offer her coffee, but she refused it and went to bed, saying she didn't feel well. Around two o'clock in the morning she exhibited the classic symptoms of this form of toxemia and was dead before they got her to the hospital. Of course, both the City and State Departments of Health got involved.

"I don't think it will take long to check you out. We have to trace the fish to your supplier immediately and take samples of food in your kitchen. I might say that your past record is impeccable."

"I don't believe it," Jack McCarthy broke in. "I don't believe one damn word of it."

"I don't think you can argue with the facts, Jack," Dom Gillette shrugged.

"Facts, hell! I had calamari myself last night and I'm still walking around hale and hearty."

"Then I suggest we get you to

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a hospital for tests right away," Dr. Cohen said. "In all probability you are all right, but that doesn't make the fish less suspicious. Only one had to be contaminated, and I hope it was only one."

The doctor sent Jack over to the hospital and went to work on the kitchen with Dom and two technicians they had parked outside.

About an hour and a half later they walked out with a bunch of little plastic bags. Dr. Cohen was all for making the shutdown very legal, complete with padlock and hanging a copy of the writ on the door. I got Dom to talk him out of it on the basis of my past A-1 rating and a fluke poisoning. I sent the staff home, locked up, and poured myself a very large vodka tonic no lime. To play it safe I called my insurance broker to report the incident. After talking with him I was ready to chew on some of Mrs. Stoner's squid myself.

I wasn't covered. If she had fallen off a barstool and broken her neck I was covered. If she had slashed her hand with a bread knife I was covered. But not for food poisoning. What a gas—I run a restaurant and I have a policy designed for an obstacle course. It's Ted Summers time in my young life once more.

I like Ted, even if he is a lawyer. What I like most is his cool. He thinks like a guy who has been brought back from the dead. He has nothing left to fear.

As I waited in Ted's outer office later that day, I couldn't help thinking of my Uncle Din. He took great fun in rewriting Ben Franklin. One of his gems applied to me right now: "A penny saved," Uncle Din would say, "is another penny toward a lawsuit."

"No, I don't want you to send flowers to her funeral, Chick," Ted says, chewing me out. "Keep a low profile on this. You aren't being sued yet. I'm sure you will be, but don't ask for it. For a while I thought we had a way out by suing your insurance broker for incompetence, but they tell me they put the food poisoning clause into their original proposal to you and you told them to reduce the policy to a bare minimum."

I didn't bother to ask him about suing the guy who had sold me the fish. He was reading Chapter 13, and he was up in his story.

So here I sit, Kelly the Pigeon. The Department of Health lifted the padlock the next morning, so I opened for lunch—but no fish. There was a story on the late news that warned people about squid and

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asked anyone who had eaten in my place to see their doctor. Some publicity!

Three days later I got a report signed by Dr. Cohen saying that, after an analysis of confiscated squid at my supplier's, the toxins appeared to have been confined to one fish. It also said that no disciplinary action would be recommended.

One week after Mrs. Stoner went to her glory the papers came. They were laid on me by a seedy-looking clunk that spelled "process server" from the second he walked in the door. There was no sense in dodging it, so I accepted 'em, read 'em, and wept.

Amid all the whereases, wheretos, and other legal lingo it snapped out at me: $250,000 in damages.

Later in Ted's office I sat with my stomach in a mangle as he read through the papers. I used to think lawyers were very fast readers until I realized the stuff was all form. They just had to fill in the blanks.

"Oh, no," he says when he gets to the last page.

"What's the matter?"

"This nut is going *pro se*. Fighting the case by himself without a lawyer."

"Good, we can clobber the dope."

"Don't kid yourself. A *pro se* case can make a monkey out of a lawyer. The jury identifies with the plaintiff. Even the judge gets into the act, advising him on legal form and helping him with the cross-examination of witnesses. It could be a bad show for us, Chick."

"Why would he do that, anyway? Is he a frustrated lawyer?"

"Or a flunkout. It's a good ploy. His case is documented by the Department of Health. My only shot is to argue that you were not negligent, and that means a lot of expert witnesses, icthyologists, pathologists, the works. That's where the judge will be helping him. Hell, I can't even negotiate a settlement because it's almost impossible doing it with the principal. With another lawyer I could maneuver."

"Why don't we have a talk with this Stoner character?"

"Not on your life. That's all the judge would have to hear to suspect surprise. By the way, do you have $250,000?"

"Not if I liquidate the club, sell the staff into bondage, and hock my cuff links and my soul. I can get $100 for the links. The cash value of my soul is debatable."

I was on a downer when I got back to the club and shut myself in the rear office to brood.

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My whole future seemed to rest in the hands of a jury, and my lawyer was already losing heart.

I was irritated when Jack McCarthy came in. He had been walking around in a daze since this mess had started. He blamed himself. He blamed Guido. He blamed the United States fishing industry. He mostly blamed himself, and his martyrdom was becoming an annoyance.

"Chick," he says, sitting down on the couch to the right of the desk, "I just don't buy it. I'm thirty-five years in this business and I've never heard of a thing like this. Sure, someone comes down with ptomaine once in a while—even in the best of places. But rarely does it happen to just one person."

"That's all covered in the Department of Health report." I tossed him my copy. "Read it and weep."

"I did. Barry gave me a copy the other day and I've been thinking about it."

"So think about it all you want. It isn't going to change it."

"You know, Chick, for all we know, this could be the old cockroach con."

"McCarthy, you're out of your bird." The cockroach con is an old dodge that grifters used to cadge a free meal. They order the best in the house and eat everything but the dessert. That's where they plant the cockroach they brought in with them. They make a big scene and to shut them up the owner doesn't charge them for the meal. Even if the owner is hip to the act, he has to go along to shut them up.

"No, I'm not, Chick. Look, right here in this report it says there was no food at the Stoner suite except for a jar of instant coffee and a container of cream."

"If you read on, Jack, you'll see that they just moved into the suite that morning and hadn't had time to do any shopping."

"If I had a maid I wouldn't need to find time to shop. But that's not what bothers me. Where was the doggie bag?"

"Doggie bag?"

"Ling said the two men had big steaks and asked for a doggie bag. He says he remembers because he always tries to guess if the customers really have a dog. He decided they didn't."

I was on my feet and out the door to find Ling, my headwaiter. I grabbed him out of the private dining room where he was pampering a media bash and hauled him back to the office.

When he repeated what Jack

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had told me I was furious. "Why didn't you mention it before? Never mind, I know. No one asked you."

My first impulse was to call Ted Summers, but I buried it. He had enough on his head with icthyologists and other experts. So I have a flaw. Not a big one, mind you, but $250,000 in large bills will fit through even a small crack. I need someone to do legwork for me, so I opt for Cy Tregannon. Cy is a private dick with a hush-hush government background. Most of his load is industrial cases, but he handles anything. I put him on the payroll that night and sent him out with a spade and a Xerox of the DOH report.

"I don't know how far back you wanted me to go, Chick," he says, feeding me the report two days later in the office. "Philip Stoner married a May Husing in Akron five years ago. He is a self-employed sales analyst who travels quite a bit. They moved to New York the day before the, er, accident —from Hartford, Connecticut. The maid, Helen Hochek, came with them from Hartford. The friend, Jerry Smith, works for a Wall Street house. I got hold of his application from a buddy in Security down there. He's moved around quite a bit —West Coast, Canada. He's twenty-nine and met the Stoners when he worked in Hartford for one of the insurance companies."

"Is there life insurance on the dame?"

"Not a nickel."

"Isn't that odd? I mean, their friend is in insurance and they have no coverage."

"You're reaching, Chick."

"You bet I'm reaching. I'm grabbing at everything that floats by."

"Smith wasn't in the sales end, and besides, Union Fidelity doesn't write life policies."

"Union Fidelity. That's the outfit that covers me! Or half covered me."

"You're kidding, Chick. Now that's more to chew on than the doggie bag. Let's say Smith knew you weren't covered for food poisoning."

"As Ted Summers would say in his ice-water voice, 'Anybody could have known that.' My broker did. In fact, I seemed to be the only one who didn't know. What's about the doggie bag?"

"Very thin. The cab driver doesn't remember it. The elevator operator didn't notice. The maid said no."

"You talked to the maid?"

"I put an operative in the building. He 'fixed' the plumbing in the Stoner suite yesterday and got her talking. Don't

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worry, he's good, and wouldn't tip our play."

I thought for a minute, then looked at Tregannon. "What do you think, Cy?"

"I didn't just go through the motions on this, Chick. To be honest, I think the DOH report will sink you. The doggie-bag bit is weak, almost meaningless. Smith working for Union Fidelity might give Summers some shock material, but in my opinion the judge will kill it. Look, I've got a hell of a case load right now, that I can't shove aside."

"Sure, Cy, I understand. You did what you were asked to. Tell me, if you were going to stay on the case, what would be your next move?"

"That's why I'm not staying on the case, Chick. There isn't any next move."

"Remember, I said I was grabbing at anything."

"Maybe if you dig around in Hartford you might stumble onto something. But it's a shot in the dark."

Cy took off, leaving me with a decision or two to make. I was opting for the Hartford trip when Ted Summers phoned.

"Very interesting, Chick. I just had a visit from Mr. Jerry Smith, Stoner's friend. He tells me that Stoner is so broken up he doesn't want to face the ordeal of a trial if he can help it. He'll accept $200,000 in a settlement."

"What do you make of it?"

"Considering the strength of his case, I might jump at it. But a $50,000 drop makes me wonder how far down he'll go. I think they found out that this case can drag on for years. I can motion and cross-motion them to death. I'd say it's a good sign, Chick."

I gave him the dope on Smith having worked for Union Fidelity. "Maybe it's a high-class cockroach con, Ted."

"That's almost impossible to prove. Besides, the wife didn't have any life insurance. That would be the logical setup."

I didn't tell him about my Hartford trip. I just went. Years back, when I was doing comedy on the road, I worked a place called The Blue Drake in West Hartford. The owner was Tommy Palluto. The Blue Drake wasn't listed in the phone book, but Tommy was. His wife told me he had a new joint downtown called Tommy's Press Box.

If you think Tommy looks like an overweight jockey, you're right. That's just what he is. He rode some goodies at Narragansett and was smart enough to bank most of his winnings. I've known a lot of down-and-out boxers, baseball players, and a few pro-football

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gladiators, but never a down-and-out jockey. But don't think they know more about the races than you or me. They don't. Personally, I gave up analyzing the ponies years ago, on Tommy's advice. "Bet your favorite color," he told me. "It's just as scientific." And some days it actually works.

The squirt is happy to see me. "You'll never wise up, Chick," he says, dragging me over to the bar. "I hear you opened your own clam bar. You gotta be bananas."

"It's more a tacos stand, Tommy. So many of the boys were lonely, I had to give them a home."

We yak it up about mutual friends for a while and then I lay the lawsuit bag on him.

"Dumbsville, Chick, the outer limits of Dumbsville. Next to fire insurance the food bit is the most important coverage. It's like a doctor not having malpractice protection. I know, pal, I get a lot of insurance execs in here for lunch and cocktails. They could give you an earful."

"Do you know any from Union Fidelity?"

"Dunno. Do we, Midge?" Midge is a six-foot-two barman.

"Yeah, sure. Mr. Russell is at Union, and I think that new guy, Taylor."

"Can you pump them for some scam on this Smith dude?" I ask.

"Sure he can," Tommy says. "They should be in around five. What else can I do for you?"

"Give me a phone, a book to go with it, and some steak and eggs easy over."

"Hash browns and lots of mayo. I could never teach you to eat Continental."

"Yeah, like calamari."

Tommy had two private lines in his office and I went to work. There were five employment agencies listed for domestic help. I started at the top of the list and got lucky on the third one. By that time I had the script down pat. I was using my British voice.

"Yes, good afternoon. This is Charles Coleman speaking. I am trying to locate a Helen Hochek, who I understand is registered with you."

The dame on the other end asked me to hold on and was gone for a couple of minutes.

"Yes," she finally said. "Miss Hochek is listed with us, but I'm afraid she is employed at the moment."

"Oh, I see. Well, actually, I'm just trying to get in touch with her. She worked for us several years back and I'd like to see how she's getting along."

"She worked for you—in France?"

I had overplayed the hand,

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but that never fazed me. Press on, Chick!

"Yes, on the Riviera for a short time. Lovely woman. Could you give me her present address?"

"I hope you'll excuse me, Mr. Coleman, but according to her records Helen Hochek worked for the same family in Paris for five years. She joined them right after she got out of Hungary and stayed with them until she came to this country two weeks ago."

"Well, old girl, I guess I'll have to tell you the truth. I met Helen on holiday before she left France and, well, we had a sort of understanding. But I haven't heard from her since she arrived here and quite frankly I'm worried. Now the police—"

"The police? Do you think something has happened to her?"

"No, no, dear woman, it's just that I must locate her and I don't want to embarrass her —or myself."

"Well, she was hired by a Mrs. Gregory Palmer of the Statler Hotel, if that will help you."

Tommy knew the night manager of the Statler. He was back to us in ten minutes to say that Mrs. Palmer had checked out the day before the poisoning at my place. There was no Mr. Palmer with her, and if there was a maid, she had been sleeping in the bathtub, because she wasn't registered. Mrs. Palmer had given her address as Boston. One of the reporters at the bar checked with a buddy on the *Boston Globe*. The phone crossdex showed it to be a private home that had never heard of Gregory Palmer and wife.

I'm either up a tree or onto something, and I have to get back to the Big Apple to sort it out. I leave Tommy with a few details to clean up. He has to get the dope on Smith's job at Union Fidelity.

The flight from Westover Field to Kennedy was as long as a frog jump, but the cab ride from the airport was a drunken snail's crawl. By the time I reached the club I had it all fixed in my mind. Operation Reverse Con was ready to go.

I've made some silly bets, and some big bets, but never for 250 G's. It took four phone calls and half an hour of rehearsal to set it up.

First, Ted Summers gets Stoner and Smith to come down to his office for a powwow. Then Cy's bogus plumber heads for the Stoners' hotel with Stash Roberts and me. Stash is a character actor with a bigger growl than Oscar Homolka. He's a heavyset guy with a walrus mustache.

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Old Stonewall Kelly is deploying his troops for the final assault. The first wave is the plumber, who gets into the suite to check a leak. He's out in five minutes telling me the bug is in place. Okay, I hit the beach with my second assault. Stash is boffo in the role.

We had the recorder set up down the hall, so I couldn't see the maid's reaction when Stash poured it on.

"Elena, *Orülök hogy látom!* Niece, I would know you anywhere! You are a naughty girl. Going to Hartford before you come here. I didn't even know you were in the country until I got your card. You look just like your mother—why, I'd know you anywhere!"

She was fumbling all over herself, but she recovered fast and invited him in.

She told him to make himself comfortable, then beat it to the phone in the bedroom. I recognized Ted's voice on the phone when he answered it and said, yes, Mr. Stone was there, and put him on.

"There is some man here who says he's Helen's uncle. She must have written to him . . . No, he obviously never met her . . . But how can I, Phil? I don't know that much Hungarian. I tell you, Phil, I think we should pull out . . . All right, I'll wait. Do you think they'll settle tonight? I know you can't talk. Just say yes or no. Okay."

Later, when I heard the tapes at Ted's end, I almost split a gut. When Cy walks in with the doggie bag and says it was found in the hotel refuse, Smith starts screaming at Stoner. That was the long shot. I had guessed that the lady now posing as Helen Hochek was really May Stoner. Who knew the real Helen or what she looked like? They sneaked some squid into the doggie bag at dinner. When they got back to the suite, they dosed it with a toxin and urged Helen to eat it. With a wig and makeup May Stoner could carry off the maid role till I paid off.

As it turned out, Smith had worked in the documents section of Union Fidelity at the time I cut back the insurance policy. That made me the mark.

Of course, the doggie bag being found in the refuse was part of the con. They cart the refuse away every other day, so the original was long gone.

Cy turned the whole mess over to the cops and that was that. The basic mistake the Stoners and Smith made was not understanding the basic principle of High Stakes Confidence Dealing. You have to *convince* the mark, and nobody on earth could convince Jack McCarthy that his kitchen was unsanitary. But nobody!

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DEPARTMENT OF SECOND STORIES

Phyllis Ann Karr's first story, "For Cake with Clotted Cream," appeared in our 33rd Anniversary Issue (March 1974). Her second story is another "episode" from the same cloth—a tale of the Seventeenth Century, a tale of death and ruin, of greed, and hate, of bloodshed and revenge and—money . . .

BLOOD MONEY

by PHYLLIS ANN KARR

Were I five years younger, dear husband Hal, I would have killed myself for bringing such shame upon your memory. But to-day, let me be content to set all the matter down in this paper, and bury it in the earth above your grave. And pray you, also, be content with this much, for there has been enough of bloodshed.

That your father was a hard man, who should know better than you? Had his lordship your father been willing to lay aside his quarrel with Camden, this six years past come Shrovetide—had he bethought himself that his only son's life hung in the balance—had he summoned Camden, who was the nearest surgeon—but no, having sworn to ruin Camden's repute, he must needs send to Saltash for Trevane, for sottish, worse-than-useless Trevane—and that when your pressing need was for physic that same night! And so now we lie apart, with cold earth and sod and stone between us, when you might have been still in my bed.

I pray you, Hal, do not judge me in haste. I have a horror of judgements which cannot be undone. This present disgrace took root when you and I were little more than children, in 1616 when your father sued and won his unjust judgement against Thomas Penhallow, and, when Penhallow would have appealed, the Justice replied to him in the words King James had used to Star Chamber, that "it is better to maintain an unjust judgement,

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than ever to be questioning after sentence is passed." So that Penhallow was ruined, losing house and lands and all, and it was rumoured his child starved and his wife left him because of it, too.

Penhallow had reason enough to hate your father, Hal, but he dropped from sight, and for fifteen years his lordship had no thought of him save to gloat now and again over those words of his late Majesty, words which could be turned to such convenient use.

But some while after you were buried, your father went to work on Master Carnsew and Sir Edward, and by wearing them down he was able, last year, to buy out both their shares in the Wheal Nancy mine. And one day going to see his new mine, and standing to look on at the men who were drawn up out of the shaft, he met with one who, on stepping into the light of day, stood gazing back at his lordship. Then your father peered more closely, and saw beneath the grime and ore dust and coating of years, and knew this man to be Thomas Penhallow.

We searched and made enquiry (for after Harkness refused to stop longer in Wilharthen House your father had made of me, though a woman, a sort of secretary; a clever economy it was for him, seeing he need pay me no more than food, gowns, and chamber in Wilharthen, which he must have provided me in any case; nor could I leave him like Harkness, having nowhere to go). But all we learnt from the enquiry was that Penhallow had been three or four years in the Wheal Nancy, working as a tributer, for a share of the ore he brought to surface, and a good man for finding out new lodes; and the mine captain thought he had come from the Great Pelcoath when it filled with water, but how long he had been at Pelcoath, or where he lived before that, the mine captain could not say.

Your father privately fed a hope that now Penhallow had seen his old and powerful enemy, he would leave of his own will; but when the man did not do so, his lordship began to cheat him of his earnings. Your father had learned well enough, Hal, the arts of juggling accounts and corrupting assayers. To my shame, I also helped him cast up his columns of false figures—there are so many little persecutions a man may put upon his daughter-in-law day by day, she living alone under his roof.

But Penhallow did not leave—only his pile of ore grew less, which diminished your

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father's profits a little. Then, in the next fortnight there was a cave-in that shut up the new tunnel, and although no men were trapped therein, yet no ore could be got from it for three days while they dug it out again. At the last, his lordship went again to see how he might have more tin out of the miners, when Penhallow's core, having come up after their morning's time below, and playing at quoits, a quoit flew astray and narrowly missed your father, who would believe not otherwise but that it had come in malice from Penhallow's hand.

Whether indeed Thomas Penhallow meant your father some bodily mischief, or your father merely chose to believe it was so, his lordship now made up his mind he must see to the man he had wronged fifteen years ago, before that man saw to him. There was a certain worthless fellow called Ned Curnow working at the Nancy, or rather signed on to draw his month's pay, for little ore he ever brought to surface. They said that some traces in his speech and bearing shewed him to be a gentleman or gentleman's son fallen into low estate, and scarcely a day passed but Curnow was in mischief of some sort, and often serious mischief.

The mine captain pointed him out to your father, that same day of the quoit, and remarked he wished to turn this Curnow out of the mine. His lordship questioned the captain more closely, and ended by telling him to have the fellow come round to see him at Wilharthen House.

Curnow did not come round until two mornings after, and being let in by Bosvannion (our new steward, Hal; old Parsons died a fortnight after you), and finding us in the parlour, he bowed, and looked at me as a man looks at a woman, past my thirtieth year as I was, and still in the mourning I have meant never to lay aside. Then, taking an apple from the bowl on the table, he sat in the oaken armchair, which used to be your favourite, and put his feet on the settle.

Three weeks before, this vagabond had been whipt through the streets of Saltash, and stood in the pillory, and cared not who knew it, and yet he bore himself as if Wilharthen were an ale-house, and your father his drinking companion. Only to me, Hal, did Curnow shew respect. I sat on and sewed. Your father had brought me far enough into his confidence that though he did not tell me in so many words all that was in his heart, he cared little whether I

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went or whether I remained.

His lordship told Curnow of the enquiries he had made. "It was only by the grace of Sir Edward Chilwidden," said he, "that you were not banished to the galleys when you would not say the name of your home parish, and it is only the lightest thread holds you from the Stannary Gaol now."

"Send me up, then," said Curnow, "to galleys or gaol, whichever you will."

The rogue had washed his face, I think, before coming up, and perhaps even his hair, which fell long and golden on his shoulders; but his beard was untrimmed and the rags he wore left the dust of the mine on all they touched, and he was like a man who has lost all joy and desire and hope, so that he no longer cares how long he lives or when he dies.

I too, Hal, I had lost all joy, all desire and hope, and there have come lines into my face, and silver hairs amongst the chestnut. I would look very seldom in my glass but that it was your gift to me.

So your father talked for some minutes to Curnow, sounding him, as I have seen him sound the mettle of a mare before buying, or the honesty of a judge before bribing, whilst Curnow sat and ate his apple. The colour of Curnow's eyes was between green and grey, and he looked at your father as I think he might look at a long deep shaft in the mine.

At length his lordship came to the point, and offered Curnow fifteen pounds for doing away with, for killing Thomas Penhallow.

Curnow put back his head and laughed. "So I am to murder a man," he said, "and be paid for 't, too. How if I were to go to the magistrates with this tale?"

His lordship replied that "I have the magistrates in my purse, and the judges, too.

Curnow threw the core of his apple into the fire. "I misdoubt it," said he, "if you pay them in proportion as you offer to pay me."

Then they haggled over the money as if Penhallow had been a pound of fish or a pile of ore, and at last Curnow settled for twenty-five pounds. His lordship gave him ten, and told him to return when he had done it, and to come at night. Curnow bowed to me again in leaving us, and looked once more into my eyes, as a man looks at a woman. I dropt my eyes to my seam. (Your father had money enough, Hal; I could have sewed with good thread, that was not forever knotting and breaking.)

I had no power to stop this

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thing, Hal, but what great difference was there, after all, between how your father had dealt with Thomas Penhallow fifteen years ago and how he would deal with him now? In any case, whatever we keep hid from outsiders and strangers, it is no life to go about in ignorance and suspicion of those under the same roof with you, those on whom you depend, and I judged it better I should know, than only suspect.

This was why I sat up with your father into the night, to see the play run out to its end. His lordship had sent the steward on some errand to Launceston, and ordered Betty to her room an hour before sunset, to stay there all the night as punishment for some fault he pretended she had made in sweeping her kitchen, all so that we would be alone. And I much thought he meant to settle all likelihood of Curnow ever telling of the crime he had committed.

There had come no word nor even rumour from the mine during the day, and we did not know whether Curnow would return on this night or another—or indeed, I thought, ever. Your father sat and studied over his accounts. You remember how he loved his accounts, Hal; as others love their coin, and more, for there was ever the hope of catching some mistake I had made in casting them up, for which he might take me to task. I nodded over my book, and as the hours passed I rose to pour out a glass of wine from the silver bottle which had been your mother's pride.

"I would advise you against it, Margery," said your father grimly.

I smelled the wine. It was hippocras, sleep-heavy with many spices. I brought back the glassful and set it at his elbow, rather than my own. He did not drink. "Why did you not find some means of killing Penhallow by your own hand?" I asked.

"Penhallow would not have trusted himself near enough my hand," said your father. "Nor would I have trusted myself near his."

"Perhaps Ned Curnow will not trust himself near your hand again, neither," said I, measuring my words.

"I took the man's measure," said his lordship. "There is fifteen pounds in the balance. He will come."

I thought that your father had but applied his own scale to Curnow, while that insolent man with neither hope nor desire nor fear in his grey-green eyes had likely taken better measure of his lordship. But I

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did not speak this thought, and so we waited.

Somewhat after midnight a storm broke, and, thinking Curnow would not come, I might have sought my bed; but every moment I delayed would lengthen out into another moment, and yet another, and so I sat on, scarce thinking, with my book open in my lap.

Your father had laid aside even his accounts, and all was still, excepting only the thunder and rain without. A mouse ventured into the middle of the floor. Your father said, "We must find another cat," and at the sound of his voice the mouse scurried away.

Close on to one, Curnow came, knocking at the door in the pattern they had arranged. His lordship sent me with a rushlight to bring in his hireling. Curnow was wrapped in a ragged sodden cloak, and trailed mud and filth wherever he stepped, yet on seeing me, he gave me a greeting which shewed he had indeed had gentle breeding once.

When we were come again into the parlour, his lordship stood with the silver bottle in one hand already and a fresh glass in the other. "Have you done it?" he asked.

Curnow unwrapped the cloak and tossed it down on the bench. Beneath it he carried in one hand his miner's pickaxe of iron. The rain had wetted him through, cloak and all, but had not utterly rinsed away the blood and bits of hair from the flat-headed end. Curnow stepped forward to shew it his lordship at closer hand.

His lordship looked closely at the blood, and nodded. "There is your fifteen pounds, safe in the purse," said he. "But drink you a glass of hippocras before you go, to warm you against the weather."

"Tom Penhallow told me much about you before he died," replied Curnow, "and there is one thing which I owe his soul."

And turning the pickaxe to its sharpened end, he drove it into your father's skull. The poisoned wine mingled with the blood and streams of filthy water, and the silver bottle took a great dent as it fell and struck the floor.

Curnow let fall his pickaxe with your father's corpse, and turned to me. He smiled. "Here is enough of murder for the day, my lady," he said. "But do not follow me, lest you take a chill in the storm."

I smiled at him then as a woman smiles at a man. "There will no one come until the morning," I said. "Time enough to take off your clothes and dry them by the fire."

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Hal, your father never did but one good work in the whole of his life, and that was the begetting of you, and that he undid again the night he let you die for his stubborn heart. Yet he was your father, and my father-in-law, and murdered, and he had at least the bowels to leave me better provided for by his death than he had in his life. Let his slayer go out into the night and the storm, and by morning was it likely they could find so much as his trail?

Forgive me, Hal, my husband, but how else could I keep Ned Curnow until the morning, when he could be taken, save in my bed?

"Q"

NEXT MONTH . . .

34th ANNIVERSARY!

ALL-STAR Issue!

12 *new* stories — including

EDWARD D. HOCH *(about Dr. Sam Hawthorne)*

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a DR. COLIN STARR detective story by

RUFUS KING

Dr. Colin Starr's favorite vacation spot was the Jenklin's hunting lodge in the Adirondacks. When he arrived, the deer-hunting season had already begun—so, naturally, there was an "accident"...

BUCK FEVER

by RUFUS KING

The lake held a heliotrope flush of dawn, and it was very cold, and very still. Fragile ice rimmed its edges, tentatively seeking a glaze for the late fall's first imprisonment of the water.

The crack of a single rifle shot came clear, down from westward.

Gertrude Enford woke up. There was no blurred transition from slumber. She knew exactly where she was. She knew the day. She knew the time of day. She suspected that the source of her wakening had been a shot.

Gertrude was an odd woman, lean and stringy, tough in her fibers, and indefinably smart, no matter what she wore or how she put it on. There was a great assurance in all of her movements; and her voice, which she never bothered to lower, was decisive, final, and clipped. Gertrude's age was 47. Her hair, which she wore rather long, and arranged with an artful simplicity, still excitingly retained its natural deep auburn tones. She was very rich.

You had to be rich to stay at the Lodge, for its tariff was stiff, and you either paid it and liked it, or else you stayed away. The Jenklins owned it, Jerry and Sara: a rambling estate in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains, having its own lake, 400 acres, and the best deer hunting in the north country.

Gertrude never minced de-

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cisions. In spite of the earliness of the hour she decided to get up. She had had enough sleep and her nerves were in excellent condition. She dressed. She looked at herself critically in a mirror. Her face, she decided, was in shape: colorless, ageless, with interesting wide frank eyes and a mouth whose shading held a dash of fuchsia in its red.

She went through the living room of her suite and out into a central hallway, darkly paneled, dark with the obscurity of the day's pale dawn, and down stairs of waxed oak. Lighted candles were somber in the main hall—the Jenklins leaned heavily on atmosphere—and she saw the stranger vaguely, standing before a large open hearth where birch logs flamed.

She said, "I'm Gertrude Enford. When did you get in?"

"I came on the morning train. The one that dumps you out at half-past four. I'm Colin Starr."

"Oh, yes. They said you were coming—but they said next week."

"It's hard for me to arrange anything definitely."

"Yes, I suppose that would be so."

Gertrude stared at Starr openly, taking him all in, his compact tall vigor and brief ugliness of features which gave to his face a curious effect of charm. One of those healthy animals, she thought, who live in the eternal forties, with digestions like clockwork. A server, a good man. A keen, kind, honest man and to hell with him. One who from birth would have lived on the proper emotional side of the tracks, in a lovely house of white bricks secure on a foundation of ethics. She thought: "What I need is a couple of cups of strong black coffee."

Gertrude sketchily recalled Dr. Starr's dossier as she had obliquely learned it: his home was in Ohio, in one of those small towns which you sometimes see at fairs done in miniature, a well-cleaned, polished microcosm of all that was sturdiest and best in the nation. The name, if she remembered, was Laurel Falls. He was a doctor of considerable repute, a repute that reached beyond any local or State boundaries, a man of wealth, and a man with a strange aptitude for the medico-legal angles of his profession. This, in the sense of his having been instrumental in the unmasking of several apparently natural deaths and stamping them as murder.

"I understand you have been here before, Doctor."

"Yes, several times. Whenever I can arrange to, in fact.

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The Jenklins are old friends." Starr considered Gertrude's turnout, its severe smartness, the inappropriateness of her shoes. "You're not going out this morning?"

"I don't hunt. I'm here with Jack, my brother, and a friend of his—an intense young man by the name of Mason Hallway, whose family is involved with soaps. Jack hopes to bag a twelve-point buck. I've no objection to his mounting the heads—we live on Long Island, a little town called Mealand, and his den is littered with antlers—but I do object to his making us eat up the rest of them. Jack thinks it's the only sporting thing to do. Would that be atavism or just a plain obsession, Doctor?"

"Perhaps just a healthy appetite?"

"Well, if it's healthy, it's the—"

The main door opened and Bill, one of the guides, came in: a hardened youngster, leathery, and with deep blue, vital eyes. Hard running had left him breathless.

He said to Gertrude, "Where's Mr. Jenklin, Miss Enford? Mr. Singmen's been shot. He's bad."

Gertrude's pale long fingers clutched the back of a chair for support. Starr observed her sudden convulsive trembling and thought she was about to faint.

She said, "Mr. Singmen is dead?"

"No, he ain't dead, but he's near enough to make no difference. They're bringing him in. I got to find Mr. Jenklin. I got to find a doctor."

"I'm a doctor."

Bill looked relievedly at Starr.

"Maybe you can fix him up?"

"Maybe I can."

But he couldn't. Nothing could. Starr knew that when Singmen was brought in and carried up to a bed. Singmen was of medium build, a middle-aged man wearing corduroys, stout boots, a gray hunting jacket, and a red cap. He had been shot through the back. There was not, on the gray hunting jacket, much blood, and Starr believed shortly that an internal hemorrhage would make death a matter of minutes or of an hour at most.

Singmen's eyes were cloudy and almost absurdly kind. They gave his pleasant face a stricken spaniel look. He said to Starr, "I should have worn my red hunting jacket after all, not that gray one. The red cap wasn't enough."

"There's no use," Starr

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thought, "in making him preserve his ebbing strength. He might as well talk and keep his mind occupied. There's nothing at all I can do."

"Who shot you, Mr. Singmen?"

"I don't know."

"Do you mean to say that whoever did it didn't come to your help?"

"Yes. Too frightened, I guess. A couple of the guides found me and brought me in." Singmen sighed gently and closed his cloudy eyes. "It's a funny thing how excited some men will get when they think they see a buck."

"Were you in brush or on a trail?"

"A trail, Doctor."

"Fairly straight?"

"Yes, right along there it was, for almost a hundred yards or so. But you know how it is with buck fever."

"Look here, Singmen, that shot went directly through your back in a straight line. Surely whoever fired must have seen you pretty clearly. Tell me this—"

"I'm very tired, Doctor."

"I know you are. But tell me, of the people who are up here, of the men out hunting this morning, has any one of them anything against you?"

"Me? Lord, no, Doctor. I've always been my own worst enemy." Singmen smiled feebly at this feeble airing of the bromide. "Don't get any notion like that in your head."

"Was any one of them using the same trail you were on?"

"No. I did meet Mason Hallway for a minute at the fork, where there's a cross-trail of sorts, but he hit on off to the left up toward the ridge. He's that young friend of Jack Enford. Enford has a nice sister, by the way. A very interesting woman. She's staying here. You'll meet her."

"I have. Was Mason Hallway the only man you saw?"

"That's right, Doctor. It couldn't have been he who caused this accident, because he knew the way I was heading. Just how bad am I, Doctor?"

"You are all right." And Singmen was . . . He was dead.

Starr talked with Sara Jenklin while they were waiting for the Sheriff. Gray peppered Sara's dark sleek hair, and her animated eyes were heavy with shock and worry.

Seven hunters, Sara said, were out that morning, including Singmen. None of the others had yet returned, including Mason Hallway, whom Singmen had met at the fork and who had branched off to hit it up for the ridge. No concerted drive had been set for

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the morning. Each man had started off on his own. The guides were out now, bringing them in.

"Tell me, Sara, something about Singmen."

"There isn't much, Colin. He was a widower. No children. His wife was Alice Dobbs. Alice and I went to school together, which is how Arthur started coming up here."

"What did he do?"

"Arthur? Nothing. He had a good income and more or less budgeted it. He owned a cooperative apartment in New York, just a good, plain fine one with nothing bizarre about it—old stuff, old silver. He kept a place on the beach at Miami." Sara looked at Starr earnestly. "He couldn't have been a kinder man, or more harmless."

"You're puzzled, Sara, too?"

"Naturally I'm puzzled. I know the place in the trail where he was shot. There's a good clear view for quite a stretch back. Anyhow, every man who went out this morning is experienced. I just can't believe that one of them would get buck fever."

"What of Mason Hallway, Sara?"

"I don't know, except that I like him. It's his first time here. He came with the Enfords. I've known them, of course, for several years. Jack met him sometime last spring, I understand, when both of them were applying for the Reserve Corps. Each was turned down for some reason or other, and it seemed, well, to form a bond. They became quite friendly."

"Did Hallway know Singmen?"

"Only in the sense of their having met two days ago."

Starr thought back on Gertrude Enford's convulsive trembling, the sharp clutch of her fingers on the chair when the guide had told them about Singmen having been shot. It had struck him as far too sharp a reaction at news concerning a stranger, no matter how shocking. There was a connection with Singmen, he felt, either through Hallway or through the Enfords themselves.

"Tell me about Jack Enford. I've met his sister."

Sara thought for a while, staring contemplatively at Starr with her dark gray animated eyes.

"Jack's all right."

"That suggests reservations."

"Yes, I know it does. Jack's the type of man whom all sorts of things are said about. But nothing's ever proved. I feel sorry for him because you know how that sort of thing goes. How it spreads. He's a magnet for innuendoes."

"Unpleasant ones?"

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"Some. Very."

"Moral? Ethical? Financial?"

"Oh, they run the whole list. His job's promoting things. Sometimes they come off; more frequently they don't—leaving a lot of bag-holders."

"Including, perhaps, Singmen?"

"No; I'm sure about that. Jack and his sister only met Arthur two days ago, too."

"I've still a feeling that there's some connection. I gathered that from Miss Enford's reaction to the news."

Sara leaned forward and said earnestly, "Colin, Arthur Singmen never harmed anyone in his life. There's not even anyone I know of left who will gain by his death. He told me last season that he was leaving his money to charity. Now if it had been Jack—" She bit her lip and stopped abruptly.

"Yes, Sara?"

"I'm doing exactly what I've just complained about in others. Going in for innuendoes. You see, with the exception of Arthur and Mason Hallway, Jack knows the other men who were out this morning fairly well. And I mean by that, of course, that they know him. Frankly, they don't like him. And to be still more frank about it, I think that each has been bitten by one or another of his promotion schemes."

"Deeply enough to want to take a pot shot at him?"

Sara hesitated.

"Who can ever tell about that? But it wasn't Jack who was shot; it was Arthur."

"Did you see them when they left this morning, Sara?"

"Yes."

"What sort of hunting jacket was Jack Enford wearing?" Starr asked.

"His regular red one."

"Then that knocks out that thought. Singmen's was gray."

They were sitting in Sara's living room: a pleasant place of pickled pine, with casement windows having a magnificient view across a valley that was flooding with the rising sun. A maid came in without knocking. She said to Sara, "It's Miss Enford, ma'am. I think she's got hysterics. Anyhow, she's screeching awfully."

Gertrude had them, all right. Severely. And there was little that Starr could do but give her an opiate to knock her out. He observed the usual disjointed mélange of sense and nonsense to her ravings: a mélange of fears and remembrances, all uprooted from the sable caves of her subconscious mind and brokenly shrieked out.

He felt strongly disturbed, more so even than was usual with him during such exhibitions. He thought: "She thinks

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that it was murder, all right. Her brother's on her mind like an obsession. It must be that she thinks the shot was meant for her brother—as Sara did."

Starr stood watching Gertrude quiet down; then a man stepped into the room very softly. His face was deadly pale, and stamped with a weak prettiness that contrasted oddly with his large rangy build.

He said to Starr, "Oh, you're the doctor, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm her brother. How is she?"

"She has had a bad shock, Mr. Enford."

"Yes, I know. Look here—nothing will happen to her, will it?"

"No, she'll get over it."

Jack felt sweat on his forehead. He found it distasteful and wiped it away.

"Awful thing about Arthur Singmen."

"Very."

"You were with him, weren't you? I mean when he died?"

"Yes."

"Well—did he say anything?"

"He did speak of having met your friend Mr. Hallway along the trail. He mentioned a fork."

"Yes? He didn't imply—I mean he didn't seem to feel that Mason was responsible, did he?"

"No, on the contrary. He felt strongly that Mr. Hallway could not have been."

"It's funny that whoever did fire the shot didn't come forward right away and help Singmen. I suppose it was panic at the accident."

"I suppose it was."

"It makes it awkward."

"Awkward, Mr. Enford?"

"Sure, for the rest of us."

"Your sister seemed to feel—I don't know exactly how to put this, but I got the impression that she, well, has her own rather strong ideas about this business."

"Yes?"

Both of them stared down at the bed, at Gertrude with her lips a little parted over sharp white teeth, with her breath coming through them in the first deep plunge into the opiate sleep.

"Your sister—I almost gathered that she was inclined to consider it murder. But that the bullet wasn't meant for Singmen."

"She said that?"

"Not in so many words. I felt it implied, rather, in her hysteria."

"Look, Doctor, that's all that it was. Just hysteria. I know Gertrude, and she gets that way. She's highly strung. She goes right off her bat sometimes just over trifles."

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Jack's hand was petulant again with sweat. "It isn't only Gertrude. Our family has always been that way. I am myself sometimes. Highstrung."

"Was that why they rejected you for the Reserves last spring, Mr. Enford?"

"Well, not entirely." Jack smiled. There was some syrup on the smile's deprecatory sweetness. "I believe they just considered me as temperamentally unfit."

"I understand that Mr. Hallway was rejected at the same time, that that was how you met. Was he rejected on the same grounds?"

Jack suddenly stopped being pleasant.

"Why do you harp on him? Singmen gave him a clean slate, isn't that good enough for you?"

"Sorry, Mr. Enford."

"That's all right. So am I. I told you that I—that it ran in the family. Forget it, Doctor."

Four men stood in the main hall.

Welford, a banker from Boston, dominated the others in appearance: strikingly silver-haired, thin, and tall to the point of gauntness, with sharply chiseled ears and nose and lips. They gave him the patrician look. He knew its value to him in business, even though it amused him considerably when he considered his private vices, which were pigs' knuckles, Western novels, and gin mixed with plain water and no ice.

He observed Jack Enford coming into the room with a stranger. He did not see the stranger very clearly, because his fine bold eyes were concentrating so sharply on Enford. Their expression was not pleasant. He thought: "You wait!"

Burkell stood beside Welford. Denwood Burkell was a novelist of a brief repute whose talent lay in calling soil *soil*. He was a little man, barely five feet two inches in his lifts, and still he publicized himself amazingly as a sportsman: big fish, big game. Secretly it bored him stiff, but his agent thought it useful with his public. The hours were the things that "got his goat." It irked him that no animal of the slightest publicity value could, apparently, be bagged at noon.

Haskell Fortescue was on Welford's other side. He was a corporation counsel for a general utilities outfit in the South: a stout man, rotund all over, with limpid little eyes and a merry mouth. People thought him famously jolly. His reaction to Enford was a little smile.

The fourth man, Hallway, was very much the intense young man that Gertrude had

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called him. You got that from the deep burning look in his dark eyes rather than from his build, which was medium enough. But his eyes were extraordinary and Starr read in them, as he shook hands, a hint of emotionalism, the suggestion of the dreamer or the fanatic—say, in the sense of a hero worshiper who would let his god or enthusiasm of the hour go to good lengths before admitting even the possibility of any feet of clay.

Starr met them and noted that they wore, to a man, hunting jackets of assorted reds. He acknowledged the usual perfunctory generalities: *"Terrible . . . Fine man, Singmen . . . Can't understand it . . . Happens every year—terrible . . . You would think that by now . . . Buck fever—you might expect it in a novice, but not one of us—terrible!"* Then he went into a small lounge where he saw Jerry Jenklin.

Jerry, Sara's husband, seemed lethargic when you first met him, which wasn't so. He was like an animal that way, slipping into the most fluid physical activity without any consciousness on the part of anyone watching him of any transition. Everything about him looked sleepy and slow. You expected him to scratch himself and continuously yawn.

He said to Starr, "You've still got to meet McDuff."

"The seventh hunter?"

"Yes. He'll be along soon. Well?"

"Well?"

Jerry continued to slouch and look sleepy. He offered Starr a cigarette, lit one himself, and let it dangle.

"This is bad, Colin. It's murder. And there's one thing that makes it pretty convincing that Singmen was meant to be the victim. He's the only one of the lot who wore a gray hunting jacket. They all must have known that, because they started out together. Still, you've been talking with Sara. I can only emphasize what she told you, that there's no sane reason why anybody here or anywhere else would want to kill Singmen—but someone did. So that leaves us what?"

"It leaves us with Miss Enford in hysteria."

"Yes, Sara told me that, too. Jack's at the bottom of that. She's pretty blind about him, but she can't be so utterly blind as not to realize what a more rational victim he would have made than Singmen. Or than anybody else who's here."

"She seems quite a good deal older."

"She is. She's always dominated him. She brought him up."

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"From childhood?"

"Nearly. He was eleven when their parents died. Gertrude was going on nineteen. She made a fine mess of it, if you ask me." Jerry leisurely turned his head. "That's McDuff now. Hey, McDuff!"

McDuff came in. He was a huge, raw-boned, beef-skinned, red-nosed man and, Starr realized, full of Scotch. He was dour. He walked with precise care. He shook hands with Starr, lowered himself into a chair, and said, "I've been up all night." His eyes looked it. They were as red as his hunting jacket. "You're the doctor. Why couldn't you pull old Singmen through?"

"It was too late."

McDuff turned to Jerry.

"Who was the fool who got buck fever?"

"No one's saying."

"He will." McDuff stuck a bony finger out at Starr. "You know that, Doctor. No man can escape from a consciousness of guilt."

"I'm afraid they've been known to, Mr. McDuff. Sometimes it has to be smoked out."

Starr sent a wire. He sent it to the proper department of the Reserve Corps at which Enford and Hallway had applied. He wanted to know on what grounds the two men had been rejected. He wanted to know whether there was any record on the files about a man named Arthur Singmen. As a right to the courtesy of this information he referred to himself as a friend of the Adjutant General.

It was, he felt, an arrow shot into the air but it was impossible to get rid of the belief that Jack Enford was a focal point in the case. It was impossible to forget that Jack's friend Mason Hallway had met and talked with Singmen just before the shot was fired. It seemed of pressing importance to get all the information about Enford and Hallway and Singmen that he could.

The Sheriff was starting to spread out his bag of tricks in the main hall. Starr joined the group and was introduced. He liked the Sheriff for his air of plain forthrightness, and the healthy color of his skin, and, in spite of the air of forthrightness, his political ability to skate with dexterity over these assembled surfaces of human importance and considerable wealth.

"Well, gentlemen," the Sheriff said in conclusion, "I think it's murder, all right; and because of any seeming lack of motive I think that Mr. Singmen was murdered by mistake. Now there's only one thing that made him look different from the rest of you

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at any distance away in the woods, and that was his gray jacket. All the rest of you had on some shade of red. The point as I see it is this: was that Mr. Singmen's jacket? Was it the one he wore habitually or did he borrow it from somebody else?"

McDuff aroused.

"That gray jacket was mine. I was up all night and saw Singmen when he came down this morning. He had ripped the sleeve of his own jacket yesterday and was looking for one of the maids to sew it. I suggested he leave it and borrow that gray one of mine. Gentlemen, I sent that man to his death."

"No, I'd hardly say that, Mr. McDuff. The question seems to be, did you sometimes wear that gray jacket yourself?"

"Certainly. I wore it every day last week. I'd ordered a red one, but it only came through last night."

The Sheriff was pleased.

"Well, now we seem to be getting somewhere."

McDuff, who was not so pleased, began to get the impact of the drift.

"Me? That shot was meant for me?"

"After all, Mr. McDuff, it was aimed at the only gray jacket in camp."

Starr thought: "Wait—this is wrong; you've gone off the track somewhere. They all started off together this morning; they would have known that Singmen was wearing the gray jacket, not McDuff." Then he felt a presence behind him, and turned, and saw Gertrude Enford in the doorway. She was looking at the Sheriff with her wide frank eyes. Then she turned them on McDuff.

Then she started to laugh hysterically.

The answering wire came toward late afternoon.

No one by the name of Arthur Singmen, Starr read, was listed or known. Mason Hallway rejected under suspicion of an incipient psychopathological trend. Jack Enford rejected for deuteranopia, but recent experiments in the detection of camouflage made it desirable Enford apply again.

Starr thought carefully for a long while. So it was like that.

He folded the telegram and put it in his pocket. He looked up the Sheriff. He looked up Bill, the guide who had found Singmen that morning. He asked Bill to take them over the trail which Singmen had followed. The sun was sinking below the top of the range. Pine and balsam needles offered a silent, pungent strip of carpeting for their steps.

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It was, Starr said to the Sheriff, one of the oddest cases he had ever come upon. At least he thought so. He asked the Sheriff to take the five protagonists: a kindly man who was dead; a local, easy-going character who had lent the kindly man a gray hunting jacket; an idealist who touched on being a zealot and who was thought to have a psychopathological trend; a weakling, and a woman who feared desperately for this weakling whom she herself had brought up. The case should, he thought, be speedily cleared up. For he believed that there was danger still.

They came to the "cross-trail of sorts" which Singmen had mentioned, and where there was a definite fork to the left. It was here that Singmen had met and spoken briefly with Hallway. They stood at the fork and Starr explained to the Sheriff his theory of what could have occurred.

He suggested that they observe the trail along which they had just come: it was a winding one, masked by a turn as closely as ten yards back.

They observed the "trail of sorts" which Hallway had used that morning. It too was tortuous, and from their viewpoint briefly obscured.

He indicated then the trail which forked to the left, the one which Hallway had taken after his chat with Singmen: he pointed out that you could not see any farther than several yards along it at the most.

On the other hand, the right fork, which Singmen had continued on, held a straight and unobstructed stretch through the woods for possibly a hundred yards; and therein, Starr suggested to the Sheriff, could lie the answer to the case.

He suggested that the Sheriff put pressure on young Hallway . . . He suggested that they borrow seven coats.

Gertrude decided on a jade green net. It offset her hair. She fixed her face carefully so the jade didn't also offset her skin. Pretty good. They'd have to get out of here on the morning train. Get right out and away from here, if that milk-fed Sheriff didn't force them to stay. Nice guy, the Sheriff. A he-man. With a whittler's delicate touch. And, no doubt, a rattler's fang. Tooth? No, fang. She felt that every hour they stayed here spelled—for Jack, the most desperate sort of danger . . . Gertrude shuddered.

She'd been shuddering a lot all through the day and even seven old-fashioneds hadn't soothed the jitters. She clasped an emerald necklace about her

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throat. What would an eighth old-fashioned do?

She went downstairs, a smart, flowing shaft of jade.

All right. Why not? If he wanted to sit and watch her down her eighth, let him.

"Sit down, Dr. Starr. I'm thinking of a cocktail. I'm still on the first today—the first dozen. —Jane!"

"Miss?"

"An old-fashioned."

"Yes, Miss. And you, sir?"

Starr would, he said, have an old-fashioned too.

"I missed you this afternoon, Doctor. I haven't thanked you yet for your kindness this morning."

"Not at all, Miss Enford. Any St. Bernard in a storm."

"I go off that way all the time. People get so they supply other house guests with that stuff you stuff in your ears to keep out street noises."

"Haven't you ever done anything about it?"

"Of course I have. I've been to every psychiatrist in town. My major reaction was that most of the psychiatrists needed *me*. Honestly, Doctor, there was one man who had the infernal nerve to ask me how I would handle the situation if the *Normandie* started sailing up Broadway."

"Of course you told him?"

"Explicitly. After I got home I sent him a bill for twenty-five dollars." *("I wish that old-fashioned would come. I can't keep this up much longer. I'll start shuddering again.")* "Tell me—you've been talking with the Sheriff; has he found anything out?"

"About Singmen?"

"About his murder."

Starr looked evasive.

"I'm afraid the case is in his hands."

"Oh—then there is a case?"

"He thinks so. He plans to conduct a little experiment."

"Really? Of what nature, Doctor?"

"I understand it has to do with the selection of a hunting jacket."

"Are you being serious?"

"Very serious, Miss Enford."

"That maid is taking a wretched time with those old-fashioneds."

Gertrude looked toward the door hopefully, on the last outpost of her nerves. There were people coming in, but there were no old-fashioneds, and there was no maid. The Sheriff came first, carrying some hunting jackets on his arm. The six men left from the morning hunt trailed him. They grouped, with awkward reticence, near the blazing hearth. The Jenklins, with odd formality, came in and sat on a settee near the doorway.

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"It's like a tableau," Gertrude thought: "stilted. Jack looks terrible. I wish he'd look at me." She examined Hallway. "He's worse off than Jack," she decided. A chill ran through Gertrude and she thought, still covertly examining Hallway: "He's talked. He's spilled it." Then the future became a tunnel through which she was entering into bitter darkness.

The Sheriff was folding the hunting jackets lengthwise and placing them side by side on a lounge. Odd—six of them were in different shades of red, ranging from maroon to vivid scarlet, but the seventh one was gray. The Sheriff was speaking, and Gertrude listened with a feverish impatience to this prelude which, from the look on Mason Hallway's tortured face, she had already discounted.

"—defalcation," the Sheriff was saying, "—outright theft of a good many thousands of dollars, nearly two hundred, to be exact—a swindle perpetrated by Mr. Enford and achieved partly through the influential and trusted position of his friend Mr. Hallway. There was no doubt but that Mr. Hallway had been completely deceived as to the transaction, but Mr. Hallway had ultimately discovered its criminal nature and had insisted that the miserable business be exposed, even though he himself would also be subject to prosecution and disgrace. Mr. Hallway was that kind of man—an idealist."

"Yes," Gertrude thought, "we know all that. Get *on* with it."

There was, the Sheriff said, a curious angle about the matter which gave it a classic touch: the strange power of domination which Miss Enford held over her young brother, who all of his life had been a moral weakling. It was a power, in Dr. Starr's opinion, analogous to that exercised over her husband by Lady Macbeth, in the sense that Miss Enford had planted in her brother's mind the seed of murder. A seed which she had then nurtured into fruition.

Gertrude thought: "Give us your proof. It was still a hunting accident and nothing can make it come out differently."

Mr. Hallway had admitted to him, the Sheriff said, that he had agreed to accompany Miss Enford and her brother on this hunting trip, so that they could all talk things over. Miss Enford had pleaded that her own disgrace at her brother's exposure would be as deep as theirs. She had begged Mr. Hallway not to force her into social ostracism. She had insisted that a reasoned discussion of

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the disgraceful affair would show them some honorable way out. That, of course, was nothing but a lure. Mr. Hallway had been deliberately brought up here to be "accidentally" shot and killed—to silence him and his zealous moral qualms. Mr. Singmen had unhappily been shot instead. Perhaps Dr. Starr would offer his conclusions about that?

Starr was nervously depressed. It affected him this way—the end of a chase, and any psychological trick devised to cause a suspect to crack. He sensed the virulence in Gertrude, her fierce mental intention to make her brother look at her so that she could control him. Starr spoke to her directly, forcing her to attend to him.

"Miss Enford, your brother followed Mr. Hallway this morning, staying a careful distance behind. By the time your brother reached the fork, Mr. Hallway had completed his brief talk with Mr. Singmen and was already lost to view behind the first turning of the trail that leads up to the ridge. On the other hand, Mr. Singmen was still in view, say a hundred yards or more away, at the farther end of the clear stretch of the right-hand trail.

"Your brother took for granted that Mr. Singmen was Mr. Hallway and followed him. He shot him. His mistake was a natural one, because of all the men who were out hunting this morning only Mr. Singmen and Mr. Hallway had similar builds."

Gertrude's head was shot with sharp pain. Her eyes, in memory, compared Singmen's body with Mason's. All right. That much was true. Both were of medium build, whereas the others grouped by the fire were a varied assortment of gaunt, of small, of large size, of fat. And still all right. She looked at Jack. That was true, too. He was a weakling, and a flash of honesty made Gertrude admit that perhaps it was she who had made him one. Then the hunting jackets neatly lined up on the lounge began to fascinate her.

She said desperately, "You're wrong, Doctor. Mason wore a red hunting jacket, whereas Mr. Singmen's jacket was gray. No matter what the distance, no matter what the similarity in their builds, Jack would have noticed that. He would have known by the jacket alone that Mr. Singmen couldn't have been Mason."

Starr crossed over to the hearth.

He said, "Mr. Enford, there are six coats on that lounge of varying shades of red. There is

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one coat that is gray. Will you indicate the gray one, please?"

Sweat was unpleasant on Jack's face. His lips felt abominably loose and he was terrified at the thought that he was about to cry. One chance in seven. Like that ordeal-by-fire stuff, and other tests for guilt or innocence of the Middle Ages. It suddenly didn't matter—nothing. Singmen, he remembered absently, had given several convulsive twists before he had fallen. Even Gertrude seemed a long distance away.

He pointed to the end jacket on the left.

He said, "That's the gray one."

Gertrude looked at him for a breathless second; then she screamed.

"*No*, Jack—that one is red."

Starr held her firmly by the shoulders.

"Not to your brother, Miss Enford. I suppose his vanity prevented him from ever telling you. He's color blind, you see. He *knows no red*."

"Q"

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a *NEW* crime story by

MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

Misses Lizzie and Flora Irvington were night watchers. From their dark room on the second floor they watched the cars and buses go by, watched the few pedestrians pass in the street below. And then one night . . .

EYEWITNESSES

by MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

After Mamma died, and Papa, so suddenly, three years later, Miss Lizzie and Miss Flora Irvington sold the house in which they had been born in Edenville and moved to the city. Miss Lizzie had kept house and nursed Mamma through her last illness; Miss Flora had retired as art teacher at the high school. Miss Lizzie took Papa's death especially hard; they had been more like pals than like father and daughter. They had even hunted together, and Miss Lizzie had become a very good shot.

The Misses Irvington were lucky; they found a pleasant two-bedroom apartment where they could fit the old furniture in and as far as possible lead their customary lives. To be sure, it was on a street of shops and the apartment was over one, and on one of the corners, but the store downstairs sold nothing but lamps and was genteel and quiet. There was a laundromat on another corner, a supermarket on another, and a drug store on the fourth. It was very convenient.

In Edenville, on summer evenings, they had been accustomed to sitting in the warm dark observing passers-by, exchanging neighborly gossip, sometimes sharing lemonade from the refrigerator or going out for ice cream. Here they were on the second floor, and knew none of their neighbors in the near-by houses; but they had the habit and adjusted to it. Instead of watching the neighbors, they watched the traffic.

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There was little to see; city streets weren't safe after dark and there were few pedestrians. They watched the cars go by—not just autos, there was a bus line, too—speculated on lives seen through lighted windows (they always meant to buy screens to keep out the insects so they could light up also, but never got around to it), and for an hour or two after dinner just sat and fanned themselves and exchanged occasional brief sentences.

A public library branch was within walking distance—Miss Lizzie, the older sister, hardly ever went out any more, so Miss Flora did the marketing and shopping and borrowed the books—and after a while they would drift off to their bedrooms and read, or write letters, or Miss Flora would draw pictures with her pastels, until they were sleepy. It was a languid life, but at their age it suited them both.

The night came when, gazing out as usual, they saw a man walking rather waveringly down the other side of the street. From all appearances the man, middle-aged and heavy-set, must have come from one of the bars in the next block and was on his way to wherever he had been able to park his car.

They watched him interestedly as he paused in the lighted recess window of a dress shop diagonally opposite to light a cigarette. Then suddenly another figure crossed the street from their side—a tall slim young man with blond hair curling to his shoulders and a fully grown beard.

Miss Lizzie swallowed a gasp and Miss Flora suppressed a cry.

Before their very eyes the newcomer marched up behind the standing man, drew a glittering knife from a hip pocket, and stuck it against the other's back.

A mugging! Their gaze was riveted. Apparently the victim had enough liquid courage inside of him not to take the holdup meekly. He thrust an arm backward and tried to push his assailant away. There was a short scuffle and then the blond young man dug the knife in.

The older man fell in a heap, his face to the sidewalk, and lay there very still. In the store's nightlight they could see a line of blood trickling out and running down toward the curb. The mugger stooped, fished in his victim's pockets, and stood up holding a wallet. They could see it all clearly.

Miss Flora jumped up from her chair and started across the room.

"Where are you going,

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Flora?" Miss Lizzie said sharply.

"To call the police, of course."

"Come back here at once," her sister commanded.

Miss Flora hesitated, then stood still. "Why?" she asked. "We must—"

"We must use common sense. Listen to me. If you phone the police, they will send someone and find the man—my guess is he's dead, or will be by the time anybody gets here. Then an officer will come and question us. He'll ask us to go to the police station to sign a statement.

"We'll be subpoenaed for the inquest, then we'll have to look at photographs to see if we can identify the mugger. If they think they've caught him we'll have to go down and look at a lineup. Then we'll be the only prosecution witnesses at the trial. Our names and address will be in the papers, maybe on the radio and TV news.

"There's little chance he'll be convicted. He'll be sure to have an alibi, with people to confirm it. The jury will remember things they've read about how unreliable most eyewitnesses are, and they'll acquit him. Then he'll come to take his vengeance on us."

"B-but," Miss Flora stammered, "if I don't give my name on the phone—if I just report anonymously—"

"Nonsense. They'll question everyone who could have seen it from their windows. That will include us; and in that case we'd certainly have to tell them what we saw. Leave it alone, Flora. Let the police do their own hunting. Come back here and sit down and see what happens next."

Obediently—her sister had always given the orders and she had always obeyed them—Miss Flora came back. But she couldn't bear to keep looking across the street; she shut her eyes tight and sat crushing her rebellious thoughts.

She spoke only once. "If anybody—if the mugger did come after us," she suggested tremulously, "you've always got Papa's shotgun."

Miss Lizzie snorted.

"And I'd use it," she said. "But I hardly care to live in that state of apprehension. It's none of our business. Forget it."

In the end neither of them lasted it out. Nobody else came by on foot, and nobody noticed from a passing auto. The man—he must surely be dead by now—lay in his huddled heap with the blood no longer running but sketched darkly on the sidewalk. Finally, at one o'clock, Miss Lizzie gave up the vigil, stood up stiffly, and stretched.

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"Let's go to bed, Flora," she said. "We can read about it in the paper tomorrow."

There was nothing in the morning paper, which had been made up the night before. Miss Flora bought the first edition of the evening paper, and on Page 9 there was a brief story.

MAN FOUND KNIFED
AT STORE ENTRANCE

"A patrol car cruising the Sunrise District at 3:00 A.M. today discovered the body of an apparent victim of a mugging in the entrance of Marie's Dress Shop, 3023 Bay Avenue. He had been stabbed in the back and the knife had penetrated a lung. Police found no money or wallet on the body, that of a man in his early 40s, five feet eleven inches, 192 pounds, with thinning brown hair and hazel eyes.

"He was dressed in navy blue trousers and a white shirt, with no jacket or tie, and wore huaraches. No papers or cards were found, and the murdered man is still unidentified. Police headquarters said there was no clue to the killer. Marie Harris, owner of the dress shop, said she had never seen the victim before."

That was all until two days later. This time it was in the morning paper, on Page 17:

"The mugged man who was found dead in the entrance of a dress shop on Bay Avenue early Tuesday morning has been identified by his widow as James W. Claik, 42, of 1891 26th Street, an insurance salesman. Mrs. Claik had reported him missing, and identified his body at the morgue. She said her husband had left the house about 7:30 Monday evening to meet a prospective client at a Sunrise District bar. Mr. Claik, besides his wife, Inez, leaves two children, a boy of seven and a girl of four. Funeral arrangements are pending.

"Laszlo Fontich, night bartender at Tony's, where Mrs. Claik said her husband was to meet the customer, told police he was acquainted with the insurance agent, and had seen him on the evening of July 7, in a booth, in conversation with a short bald man he did not know. The man left about 10:00 P.M., but Claik stayed on.

"'He had several more drinks,' Fontich said. 'He wasn't drunk, just feeling good. He left about 11:30, telling me he had had to park four blocks away.'

"Police headquarters said there was still no clue to the murderer. 'It's the regular unsolved mugging,' said Sergeant Dan Morey of the Uptown Station. 'Unless somebody saw it done and could lead us to the

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mugger, we have no way of finding him.'

"Arthur Hemmings, 50, 1740 Harrington Street, an accountant, told police he was the customer with whom Claik had been discussing a policy in the bar. 'I told him I'd let him know, and went home,' he said. He was cleared and not held."

"See?" said Miss Lizzie. "The trail would have led right to us and we'd be in all kinds of trouble."

"It doesn't seem right," Miss Flora objected, but she left it at that. Their parents had always said that Lizzie was the sensible one, that Flora was too excitable.

It was a week later when Flora came in from her shopping trip pale and shaking. She dropped her heavy bag on the table in the kitchen, where her sister was slicing tomatoes and cucumbers for lunch.

"Lizzie," she burst out, her voice trembling. "I just saw *him!*"

"Who?"

"That man—the one who killed Mr. Claik." She had kept the two newspaper notices in a desk drawer; she felt as if she had known James Claik.

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? We both saw him plainly in the light of the store window. I'd know him anywhere. And this must mean he lives around here. He was in the supermarket, at the refrigerator in the beer department."

"I hope you weren't foolish enough to let him see you were upset," Miss Lizzie said, frowning.

Miss Flora flushed.

"I—I'm sure not," she said feebly. Actually she wasn't at all sure. The sudden sight of the tall blond young man had been a shock. She had involuntarily let out a subdued little scream and he had turned and glanced at her curiously. For a second she had almost spoken to him, almost accused him. Then she had pulled herself together and hurried out of the market.

"You see how good it was that I kept you from spilling your guts to the cops?" Miss Lizzie said. She read a lot of crime stories and when she was agitated was likely to use unladylike language. "Now we know that man is one of our neighbors."

"But how—" Miss Flora faltered. "How could a man like that live in this nice neighborhood?"

"Muggers have to live somewhere, like everybody else. Usually they're junkies and live in some ghetto or in the Tenderloin, but there's nothing to keep them from being respect-

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able when they're not 'working,' is there? Maybe this one makes enough by robbery to live very comfortably."

Miss Flora was too shaken to reply, or to eat much lunch. She went into her bedroom, the only place where she could be private, sat down at the desk where she did her pastel drawings, and meditated for a long time. Then she opened a drawer and looked again at the newspaper clippings. She got up, locked the door, and got out her box of pastels.

The next day, when she went out on her errands, she said, "I may be late today. I'm going to take a bus downtown before I market and see if I can find some shoes I like in that sale at Blumberg's."

Miss Lizzie merely nodded. They kept their finances separate, sharing the household expenses. Miss Lizzie had inherited everything from their parents, which was only right, since she was the older one and had cared for them. Miss Flora had her teacher's pension and her social security, besides her savings. It was neither one's business what the other spent.

But Miss Flora did not go downtown. She took a bus, but it was on the 25th Street line. She got off at Parks, walked a block, and rang the bell at 1891 26th Street.

The door was opened by a thin young woman in blue jeans. Her platinum hair, Miss Flora decided, must be a wig. Behind her a small girl with a dirty face was clutching her leg and whining. "Be quiet, Luanne!" the woman snapped at her.

"Is this Mrs. Claik?" Miss Flora inquired timidly. The woman nodded and waited.

"May I come in a minute?" She couldn't discuss this on the front doorstep.

"Who are you? What do you want? If you're selling anything, I'm not buying."

"No, no!" Miss Flora was flustered. "I only—it was your husband who was killed by a mugger, wasn't it?" She felt breathless.

Mrs. Claik nodded again noncommitally. She opened the door more widely and motioned Miss Flora inside.

The small living room was nicely furnished, but most untidy. The little girl left her mother and wandered over to a corner, where a boy who must have been her brother was sitting on the floor gluing sticks together to make something. "Get lost," he muttered, but the little girl sat down by him and watched him owlishly.

Mrs. Claik waved to a chair, pulled a stocking and a plush toy off another, and sat down.

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"Did you know James?" she asked, her brows knitted.

"No—not exactly. But we saw—we saw it done, and we saw the man who did it."

"We?"

"My sister and I." Oh, she shouldn't have said that. How many sisters had windows that looked out on Marie's Dress Shop?

"Why haven't you told the police?" the widow demanded.

"I—my sister felt—" There she did it again! "We—we couldn't get involved," she went on hastily. "But I thought you might—"

She dipped into her shopping bag and extracted a large piece of drawing paper. Silently she handed it to Mrs. Claik.

Miss Flora Irvington had a gift for portraiture. The tall lanky figure, the long blond hair, the waterfall of a beard. Even the clothes—the tan slacks and the purple-flowered shirt. And in the right hand she had drawn the knife—a switchblade, she believed it was called. If they caught him with that on him it would be convincing evidence.

Mrs. Claik eyed the drawing without expression. Finally she looked up and shook her head.

"I don't know this man," she said. "It's not my husband."

"Of course not. It's—it's the mugger."

"Oh, I see."

"I thought—if *you* took this to the police—you could say it came in the mail and you don't know who drew it or sent it. I've printed a little note to go with it." She extended the folded sheet. On it was printed in blue ink in block letters: THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE MAN WHO MURDERED YOUR HUSBAND. SENT BY A FRIEND.

Mrs. Claik made no comment. Miss Flora felt her blood pressure rising.

"Don't you *want* your husband's murderer caught?" she asked indignantly.

"Oh, naturally," Mrs. Claik murmured. "But it seems such a strange way—"

"I can't do anything more. My sister Lizzie would be very angry. Suppose this awful man found out and came after us? Even if he was caught and convicted he might only get a short sentence and then—"

Miss Flora searched for a plausible excuse.

"My sister—her heart's not strong. If she knew I was doing even this much—"

Surprisingly, Mrs. Claik laughed.

"All right," she said. "I'll take this to the fuzz. Thank you very much."

"I hope you understand why—" Miss Fora's voice sounded weak even to herself.

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"Oh, sure."

The widow stood up. Miss Flora got to her feet. Three minutes later she was turning the corner to catch the bus.

The instant the front door had closed behind her, Mrs. Claik gave a short shrill whistle. A closed inner door opened and a man came out—a tall, young, full-bearded blond.

"Did you hear?" Mrs. Claik breathed between clenched teeth. The children paid no attention; they were obviously used to the man's presence.

"Yeah. Let me see that thing."

She handed him the drawing and he inspected it.

"Hot damn, the old witch is really good!" he exclaimed. "Best picture I ever had made of me. Well—"

He tore it over and over until nothing was left but scraps, which he let fall on the floor.

"Are you going to do anything?" Inez Claik said.

"I'll have to, somehow. Suppose she waits for news and doesn't get it and phones the fuzz to ask. Or she might make another drawing and come here again. Yeah, I'll have to shut her up. She lives with a sister, eh? Named Lizzie. It'll be easy."

"You were so sure nobody saw."

"There weren't any lights in the right windows. Those two old fools must have been sitting there in the dark."

"I told you to stay away from that neighborhood, Charlie. You were crazy, going to that market yesterday."

He smiled.

"I was just curious. I wanted to see the block by daylight. I was absolutely sure nobody saw me."

"Well, you were wrong. Now you say you'll have to go again. How will you manage it?"

"I have to think. I wonder if they've put a safety lock on their apartment door? Damn it, Inez, I never meant to get in this deep. I'm not a criminal."

"What else could we do? Jim was getting suspicious. He'd have thrown me out without a cent, and you couldn't support the kids, or me either. This way I'll be getting his insurance. Soon we can move and change our names. We could even leave town; we'll be sitting pretty. We went all through that when we made our plans."

"But now, with that old woman on our trail—well, I turned mugger for your sweet sake, my love, so now I guess I'll have to turn burglar. I know that kind of old square, her and her sister. Break in, scare 'em silly, rough 'em up a little, tell them they'll get worse if they ever trouble us again. They'll be petrified—that

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one was damn near it when she was here."

"Suppose they fight back, Charlie?"

"Them? Can you imagine that dame with a weapon? And if she had one, it wouldn't be a gun; her sort are frightened to death of guns. Anything else, I could overpower them easy."

He frowned.

"When did the company say the insurance would be paid?"

"At the end of the month."

"Okay. I'll have to get it fixed right away, then, before Miss Whatever-her-name-is gets any more bright ideas."

He looked over at the two children, who were still paying no attention to them. Suddenly he started.

"You, Bobby!" he yelped. "What the hell are you doing with my knife? Where'd you get it from—under the pillow where I keep it? Give it here; you'll ruin it."

"Can you sharpen it all right, Charlie?" Mrs. Claik asked anxiously.

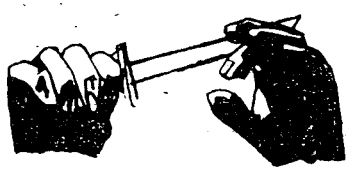
"Oh, sure. Where's the whetstone?"

He twirled the knife in his hand.

"I guess I'd better make it tonight, Inez."

"I'm still worried, honey," said Mrs. Claik.

"Oh, cool it. I know what I'm doing. I'll take my little friend here along in case I have to use it. But I won't. I'll put the fear of God into those two and they'll never bother us again. It would be different if either of them had a rod and knew how to shoot it. But they haven't. Stop worrying—I'll be safe as the dough in Fort Knox."



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a *NEW* short story by

EDMUND CRISPIN

Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19, 1809. This month marks the 166th natal anniversary of the finest of modern mystery-tellers and the acknowledged inventor of the modern detective story.

To commemorate the event and to remind us, readers and writers alike, of our great literary heritage, we now give you a Poesque tale, a "tale of the grotesque and arabesque"—Edmund Crispin's newest story, "St. Bartholomew's Day" . . .

Anniversaries invite speculation. Could Mr. Crispin's tale of horror and mystery have been written if Poe had never lived? Yes—the origins of tales of mystery and terror are as old as language itself, as old as the very first tale ever told in the darkness of cave or the flickering of fire.

Let us speculate further. Could the detective story, as we know it today, even exist if Poe had never been born? Who would have created the modern tale of detection if Poe had not done it? A. Conan Doyle? Could Doyle have invented Sherlock Holmes if Poe had not invented C. Auguste Dupin first? We wonder . . .

And now let us journey back to August 1872 and learn of the curious incident of the crucifix . . . "It is not good, in the darkness, to be near places where dead people are" . . .

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY

by EDMUND CRISPIN

The town of Clauvères stands to the north of Paris, about seven miles in the direct line from the Arc de Triomphe. Today the metropolis, expanding, has engulfed it and passed beyond; but until recently it could lay some claim to a sepa-

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rate and independent existence. The traveler, if he pauses there at all, will see streets of cobbles, small ugly cafés, a Nineteenth Century church of no architectural interest, and beyond, the scattered peasant holdings on the low range of hills which rise from the banks of the Seine where it bends east toward St. Nicholas. Only if he turns left by the graystone *mairie*, and makes his way beyond the shops and the marketplace, will he find anything to reward him; for a twenty minutes' walk in this direction, along a white, straight, dusty road, lined with tall elms, will bring him to the Château de l'Echarpe.

The Château has long been deserted, long been a museum relic of the *grand siècle*. The tall rooms with their painted ceilings and gilded chairs may be inspected on payment of five francs by anyone curious to recreate the manners of an earlier age. But few are thus curious; there are better châteaux elsewhere, and Versailles itself can be reached in 25 minutes on the bus. For the rest, all that need be said of Clauvères for the purposes of this narrative is that it has one reasonably comfortable inn, the Coq d'Or.

To this inn, in the August of 1872, came an Englishman, a Mr. Rotherham. He seems to have been a man of about 50, of independent means, and a dabbler in the obscure corners of historical research. Despite the rather ostentatious parade of erudition in his letters, he apparently published nothing—if, that is, the catalogue of the Bodleian is to be trusted; and one conceives that his scholarship was less a serious preoccupation than an excuse to the world, and perhaps to himself, for the aimless life of travel which he led. He was unmarried, and his nearest relation was a young nephew to whom he wrote frequently and at length.

Clauvères, though he neither knew nor intended it, was to be the terminus of his last journey. He had caught a particularly slow train from Rouen and was in no very good temper when he drove in a carriage from the station to the inn. The shortage of food and the other discomforts consequent upon the recently concluded Franco-Prussian war further exacerbated him.

"The inn," he writes on the evening of his arrival, "is a mediocre enough place, but the best to be found here; and the poverty which afflicts Paris itself, together with the fatigue and inconvenience of the daily journey here, have decided me

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to remain until my work is finished. My hostess is a dark, sallow, elderly woman, a widow, with one son, who is of an anarchical disposition, and a fanatical devotee of the new decadent 'poetry' (so-called) represented by Baudelaire, Verlaine, and others of that tribe. This much I gather from the copy of an *advanced* periodical which I discovered him reading.

"My room, on the first story, has three tall windows looking out upon the street, and a large four-poster bed, which appears, however, to be comfortable enough; though I have had removed from it that insanitary abomination so dear to the Gallic mind, the *feather-mattress*. Fortunately the English currency is so valuable to these people in the present wretched plight of the country that I may count upon receiving every attention possible. The only disturbance which I am likely to encounter will be the noise of the market carts rattling over the cobbles in the early morning, and that I shall no doubt bear, since I do not anticipate being here more than a week at most.

"As you know, I am in hopes of completing here my investigations into the part played by the great family of Louvois in the religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, and I flatter myself that I shall have a number of fresh facts to offer to the Historical Research Society on my return. The immediate object of my interest is a relatively obscure collateral descendant of the great Charles de Louvois, one Raoul de Savigny, who would not be in any way notable were it not for the fact that he was the only member of that staunchly Catholic family to join forces with the Huguenots, and that he was a victim of the great massacre of St. Bartholomew's day (it is a whimsical thought, is it not, that the 300th anniversary of that event takes place in only a few days' time? I must be on the watch for *spectres!*)

"The standard text-books say nothing of him beyond the bare fact of his death and the information—hardly to be wondered at in the circumstances—that he lived in strict solitude and seclusion. But since his abode was the Château de l'Echarpe, hardly three miles from the inn-door, I anticipate it may be possible to obtain locally those details in which the libraries are so peculiarly barren. In any event, I plan to visit the Château for the first time after breakfast to-morrow."

This plan was duly put into effect. Mr. Rotherham records

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that the day was unusually hot, even for August, and that there were a great many flies. Apart from these trials his walk to the Château was untroubled, and in his letter that evening he dilates at some length on his impressions of the countryside and his first view of the Château standing high above the slow-moving river.

He roused the caretaker (whom he describes as a "surly, middle-aged peasant") from his cottage and was shown through the rooms. For the most part they bore witness to a period some 50 years later than that in which he was specially interested; but he was rewarded by discovering an authentic portrait of Viscount Raoul de Savigny hanging high above the fireplace in the great drawing room. This he describes in some detail.

"It is a thin, weak, effeminate face, with narrow eyes and an unusually red mouth, at first appearance the face of a man about 30 years of age; a closer inspection, however, convinced me that the sitter must have been nearer 40 when the portrait was painted. He wears a rich dress of red silk and velvet, and the chain and medal of some insignia (I could not at the distance discern what) hangs about his neck. An hour-glass, held horizontally so as to prevent the flow of sand from one end to the other, is in his right hand, and his left rests upon an open book, on one page of which some writing is discernible.

"Wishing to inspect the writing more closely, I asked our unamiable friend if a step-ladder could be procured; but he made so great a fuss over the difficulties attendant upon this—as I had supposed—simple operation, that I had to resign myself to waiting until my return on the morrow for my curiosity to be satisfied."

Evidently the caretaker proved unsatisfactory in other respects also. He knew nothing about the Château beyond information of the conventional guidebook variety, and that was concerned wholly with the family which succeeded the Savignys in occupancy. They had not remained there long, nor any subsequent tenants; and the place had been empty for the last 50 years.

"But if Monsieur wishes to know more, he should visit Monsieur le Curé, who understands about these things."

"Really." These priests were apt to fancy themselves as historians, Mr. Rotherham reflected. "Are there any documents connected with the Savignys to be seen locally?"

"Yes, Monsieur. They are in

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the possession of M. le Curé." The man hesitated. "Perhaps—"

"Well?"

"I was going to say that if Monsieur is interested in le Vicomte Raoul de Savigny, he should perhaps see these documents before he proceeds further in the matter."

"Certainly I must see them. If they are of historical importance, they should have been donated to one of the libraries. But I have noticed that the church is apt to have no conscience in these matters."

The tour of inspection over, they left the house and crossed the broad neglected lawn at the back. Rococo bowls and statuary were ranged beneath the windows. At its farthest extremity the lawn rose in a short precipitous slope to meet the first trees of the park. And among the trees something which winked in the morning sunlight caught Mr. Rotherham's eye as he was turning to leave.

"What is that?" he asked, pointing.

"It is nothing, Monsieur." The man's tone was guarded.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Rotherham. "I distinctly caught the sun's reflection in a window." He took a few steps. "A building."

"A mausoleum, Monsieur."

"Great heavens, man"—Mr. Rotherham was excited—"why didn't you tell me? What sort of place is it? Who is buried there? You must take me to it at once."

"There is nothing of interest there, Monsieur."

"Surely I may be allowed to judge—" Mr. Rotherham hesitated, stopped, felt in his pocket, and produced a twenty-franc note. But the man shook his head.

"No, Monsieur, it is not that. If you insist, I will take you to it. But you cannot see the interior."

"There is no key?"

"Yes, Monsieur, there is a key. I could wish there was not. I should like to see it destroyed. But the family has forbidden visitors entrance to the tomb. And I was never curious to go in myself."

If these remarks struck Mr. Rotherham as strange, he does not mention the fact. He merely asked again, "And who is buried there?"

"Only one man, Monsieur. Raoul de Savigny."

"Raoul—! We must go there at once."

And so the two set off.

The mausoleum stood—and still stands—at the top of a slight eminence, surrounded and overshadowed by the trees of the park. It is circular in shape, and built in the neoclas-

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sical style which the renaissance made fashionable in France, with ornamental pillars surmounted by Ionic capitals all about it.

The roof is of copper and there is a stout oak door, carved with the arms of the de Savignys. The only unusual feature is the circlet of low elongated windows set below the roof about twelve feet from the ground, occupying very much the same position as clerestory windows in a church. Upon these Mr. Rotherham gazed long and earnestly. Finally he asked if a ladder could be fetched.

"Monsieur wishes to look in at the windows? I should not advise it."

Mr. Rotherham was beginning to lose patience. "What is all this nonsense?" he snapped. "I trust you are not afraid of ghosts? In any case it is not you whom I am asking to ascend the ladder. For the last time, will you get it for me or will you not?"

The caretaker shrugged. "As Monsieur wishes."

The ladder was brought and set against the side of the mausoleum, and Mr. Rotherham began his climb. Halfway up he was assailed by a sudden misgiving: it would not be pleasant, on arriving at the window, to find someone looking out at you . . . But he braced himself and went on, and in fact no such eventuality occurred.

The windows were filthy, both inside and out, and it was difficult to make out much of what lay within. He could discern, however, the stone sarcophagus in the center, and on the east side some kind of altar, with a brass crucifix on it. A little disappointed, he had turned away and was beginning to descend, when he was startled by a violent clanging noise from within the tomb. And when, conquering an unexpected reluctance, he looked in again, he saw that the brass crucifix had fallen onto the stone floor.

The caretaker was awaiting him at the bottom of the ladder, his face a little paler than before. "Monsieur heard?"

"Yes, of course," said Mr. Rotherham shortly. He was no doubt annoyed at having been so alarmed. "I shall be returning tomorrow," he went on quickly, "to look more closely at the portrait."

"If Monsieur could find it convenient to arrive before four o'clock—I shall be closing the grounds at that hour—"

Mr. Rotherham tut-tutted his annoyance. "Well, if it must be, it must be. It seems very early to have to leave."

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"I am going away, Monsieur. The day after tomorrow is August the 24th. I shall return on the 25th, and shall be happy then to show Monsieur anything he pleases."

"A not unsatisfactory day," Mr. Rotherham concludes his letter, "and with promise of better to come to-morrow, when I visit the priest. The incident of the crucifix did, I confess, temporarily disturb me, but I think you know that I do not subscribe to the current superstitions on such subjects; and no doubt there is some perfectly natural explanation of the phenomenon."

His second night at the Coq d'Or was not as tranquil as he had anticipated. Whether it was due to the bed, or to the unfamiliar surroundings, or to some other reason, he got but little sleep, and that little was troubled with dreams.

"One in particular," he notes in his diary, "kept recurring. I seemed to be running along a dark cobbled street, with the high gables of houses on either side. And all the time a voice was speaking rapidly and continuously in my ear, in a sort of high, thin monotone. *'Je ne suis pas encore prêt,'* it said, *'l'experience n'est pas complete.'* ('I am not yet ready. The experiment is not complete.'

"At times it rose to a desolate wail which I do not, even now, like to think of. There were torches, I think, and a crowd of indistinct people who were trying to get hold of me. Then I was in a room, standing with my back to the wall, and there was a sudden sharp pain in my right side, and the people and the torches came up to me and were doing something to my mouth. The voice rose to a high, bubbling screak in the middle of a sentence, and then broke off, and I awoke."

I conjecture that Mr. Rotherham was a man not easily daunted, for he seems despite this to have been in high spirits when, after breakfast next morning, he set off to see the Curé, who proved to be a lean ascetic man, a very heavy smoker of yellow cigarettes which he rolled himself. He appeared oddly reluctant to further Mr. Rotherham's business, but was eventually persuaded to produce some faded sheets of yellow parchment, written in a crabbed Sixteenth Century hand.

"You will find here an account," he said, "of the death of le Vicomte Raoul de Savigny in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day, 1572, together with other matters concerning him. It was written by one Jean de Tourcoing, at that time the priest of this parish, a

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few months after the events took place."

This really was a find. Mr. Rotherham took the parchment with hands which he could hardly prevent from trembling with excitement. "I may have your permission to copy this?"

The priest nodded. "But I would rather you copied it here, my son—it is not long. Please do not misunderstand me; I would of course trust you with the manuscript. But there are other reasons." He hesitated. "I must leave you now to say Compline. Please avail yourself of this room as much as you wish. And—"

Mr. Rotherham looked up from the parchment sheets. "Yes?"

"You will find something in those pages which may tempt you to a certain course of action. Resist that temptation, my son—resist it for your own good." The priest's manner was intent.

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Rotherham, who wished to be left alone with the manuscript. "Whatever you advise."

It is improbable that the priest can have been deceived by this hurried acquiescence, for he added, more kindly, "And remember, my son, at any time and in any emergency I am at your service." Then he turned and went out.

The account of Jean de Tourcoing, brief though it was, was undoubtedly authentic and contemporary. Mr. Rotherham found in it much to excite and a little to disturb him. It confirmed that Catherine de Medici was personally responsible for the massacre; it gave the number of victims in the Paris area as 13,000 (but this was probably guesswork and could not be relied on); and it repeated the legend—Mr. Rotherham smiled a little at this—that Charles IX was thereafter haunted by the spirits of dead Huguenots.

The number of the murdered in Clauvères itself was not large, but some considerable space was given up to the death of Raoul de Savigny, as by far the most notable among them. One passage is worth transcribing here in full.

"De Savigny, torturer, murderer, magician, and apostate, met his deserved end upon this same glorious night of August 24th. A man forever fearful of death, forever scheming by vile art to prolong his own wretched estate and keep earthbound his heretic soul in the middle career betwixt our Almighty Lord and His Adversary the Devil, and who, being cravenly terrified of both Heaven and Hell, sought to transgress and defy the inexorable decree of

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our going hence, he was hounded upon this same night like a dog through the streets, and struck to his own wall by a shaft in the right ribs.

"And the soldiers, being desirous of entertainment, were in mind—he being thus helpless—to torture him; in pursuance of which, his head, arms, and legs being clamped to the wall, his teeth were first drawn, singly, and his mouth slit back from the corners to the cheek-bone; he crying out the while that he was not yet ready for death, and imploring the soldiers to spare him. Then his finger-nails were torn out and the bones of his fingers separately broken. In all this he fainted often and was revived before the operation proceeded.

"At last, after five hours of continual mutilation, he was seen to be dead. And the parts of the body were assembled and embalmed in linen, and a tomb built in the park, and the remains placed there, and with them all the papers relating to his family and himself, and so at last he was left alone. All this I witnessed. Jean de Tourcoing *scripsit*, Ao 1573, in the month of February, A.M.D.G."

When Mr. Rotherham left the priest's house with his transcript of this document he was thoughtful, and the subject of his reflections is revealed in a letter which he wrote to his nephew immediately on returning to his room at the inn.

"You will think less hardly of my intent," he says, "if you consider the immense additions to historical knowledge which will almost certainly be derived from the papers in the mausoleum. To ask permission to go in there would, I know, be a fruitless endeavour; there is too much superstition against it, and the caretaker made it clear that on this score the family which owns the Château is adamant. But I believe I am competent to carry through the business without leaving any traces. All depends upon whether the key has been left behind in the caretaker's cottage."

Mr. Rotherham's plan, in brief, was as follows: during the afternoon he would purchase in the town a length of rope and a good lantern, and when darkness fell he would leave the inn, giving as his excuse the desire for a moonlight walk, and make his way to the Château de l'Echarpe. There he would climb the wall, an operation which, from what he remembered, was likely to present few difficulties, search the cottage of the absent caretaker for the key to the mausoleum, make his way in there, take the

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documents referred to by Jean de Tourcoing, re-lock the tomb, restore the key carefully to the cottage, and return to the inn.

He anticipated no trouble in opening the sarcophagus, as he had noted that the lid was a light one of copper, and—a surprising feature—was not fastened down. Presumably the stout oak door was considered a sufficient safeguard against anyone's getting in or out.

Poor Mr. Rotherham! One may admire his courage, if not his wisdom. Curiously enough, he does not appear to have remembered the priest's warning, or if he did remember it, he was determined to ignore it. And when its full significance was at last borne in on him, it was far, far too late.

The story he was to tell subsequently was also prepared, for it would be impossible to conceal the fact that something criminal had been afoot, and after his visit to the Curé it was very likely that he would be connected with it. He would say that he had got into conversation with a stranger in a café (he would not, of course, know the stranger's name or be able to describe him minutely), and had chanced to mention to him the existence of the papers in the mausoleum, and his own regret at being unable to see them; that on the following day the stranger had reappeared, in possession of those same papers, and demanding payment for them; that, being incapable of dealing physically with the stranger, he had handed over the money; that the stranger had subsequently disappeared; and that, horrified by so flagrant a theft, he had hastened to return the papers to their owners—though not, he added to himself, before sufficient time had elapsed to allow him to make a copy of them. It is perhaps fortunate for Mr. Rotherham's reputation that so threadbare an account was never put to the test.

Darkness fell with the moon three-quarters toward the full, and a small wind crept in sudden gusts round the corners of the houses and over the cobbled streets, stirring the rich, dusty foliage in the trees which stood opposite the inn. Mr. Rotherham set out at about half-past ten, carrying his lantern and his rope in a suitcase. He was relieved that no one was about when he left the inn, for he would have been hard put to account for so unusual a piece of equipment for a moonlight stroll.

The journey to the Château was accomplished without incident; the only people he saw were a pair of lovers, too engrossed in their own concerns

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to pay any attention to him. The tall iron gates leading into the grounds were locked, but a convenient beech tree which stood by the wall made it unnecessary for him to use his rope—Mr. Rotherham, despite his 50 years, was an active, even an athletic man.

The grounds were silent and deserted. A windowpane smashed gave him access to the caretaker's cottage, and after a short search he found what he wanted—a huge, ancient key, rusted and corroding. Then he was out in the night air again, and making his way toward the mausoleum.

I can picture to myself his feelings as he stood before the tall oak door, the key in one hand, his lighted lantern in the other. It is not good, in the darkness, to be near places where dead people are. But whatever fears he may have had, he suppressed them, and went on with the job in hand. The lock was rusty from long disuse, and it was several minutes before the wards would turn. Then the door stood open, and he was inside.

The sarcophagus, a tall black mass, was in front of him, its copper lid illuminated by the straggling beams of moonlight which filtered through the windows, and the air was almost unbearably foul. In the light of the lantern he could see the brass crucifix on the floor where it had fallen the day before.

He took two steps forward, hesitantly, and all at once was overwhelmed by a dreadful and irresistible feeling that he was not alone. Another two steps, and with sudden violence the door of the mausoleum slammed to behind him, and he was conscious at the same moment of a voice gabbling softly and repeatedly in his left ear some such words as: "*Dorenavant tu seras assure de compagnie.*" ("From henceforth you may rest assured of having company.")

Blind with terror, he ran to the door, clawed it open, and somehow got outside. But the key was aged and rotten, and when he tried to turn it in the lock it broke off in his hand. Throwing everything aside, he made for the wall of the park, somehow scrambled over it, and dropped into the road beyond.

Of the journey back he afterward remembered nothing but an aching misery. But he no longer had the terrible sense that someone or something was with him, and he heard the clocks of Clauvères strike half-past eleven. It still wanted half an hour to St. Bartholomew's day.

Arrived at the inn, he drank some brandy, crept up to his room, and, in a futile endeavor

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to compose his mind, wrote down in his diary the events of the evening. "God have mercy on me," the entry concludes, "I did not know. I meant well. If only I could have locked the door after me . . ."

At this point the writing tails away. For now, at twenty-past midnight on the 24th of August, he knew again that he was not alone.

He turned, and saw what was in the big fourposter bed.

The rest shall be told in his own words. It is daylight again, and he is in another room of the inn, lying on the bed with a broken leg, and composing a letter—the last—to his nephew. The writing is that of an old man, and his fingers tremble so he can hardly hold the pen.

". . . the doctors say that it would be dangerous for me to be moved, and nothing will persuade them. Yet I would suffer the most dreadful physical pain conceivable to get away from this place. In the name of heaven, come to me as fast as train and boat will carry you.

"After that renewed and terrible conviction that I was again in the presence of something malevolent and evil, I looked towards the bed. Conceive of my extreme terror when I saw some creature sit up in it. It was swathed about with soiled linen like a mummy, with the arms close against the sides. There was no face, only ragged black holes where the eyes and mouth should have been, and that of the mouth dirtied and caked about with dry blood.

"Then the arms came away from the sides with a ripping and dust of rotten cloth, and it crawled off the bed and started towards me. I screamed out and ran for the door. There was a violent pain in my left leg, and blackness.

"I can write no more. Even in the sunlight, and with another person in the room, the memory of these things fills me with a worse horror than in my nightmares I had ever thought possible. For God's sake, come to me! The prospect of the brief hours of darkness before next midnight is unbearable to me."

On August 26th, Mr. Rotherham's nephew arrived at the inn. What he saw there sent him after a few moments running to the bathroom, where he threw up long and violently.

I was in Clauvères myself during the August of 1939, just before the war. The then landlord of the Coq d'Or was a grandson of the "anarchical young man" to whom Mr. Rotherham refers, and it was over a glass of beer with him

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in the inn parlor that I heard what became of Mr. Rotherham. He was reluctant to speak of it at first, but I scented some kind of mystery, and was eventually able to persuade him.

"I can only tell you, Monsieur," he said, "what my grandfather told me. The Englishman, you understand, would not be left for a moment alone, and it fell to my grandfather to stay with him in the room. As darkness approached, his agitation greatly increased, but towards midnight he fell silent for a short while. Then my grandfather, who was dozing off in his corner, was startled to hear him cry out in a terrible voice, 'Get the priest! For God's sake get the priest!'

"My grandfather hesitated, but so urgent was the request that he felt he must comply. As he left the room he was conscious of the smell of something that was decayed, and halfway down the passage he turned and saw that the door of the bedroom was opening slowly, and he heard the Englishman's voice cease abruptly. He hesitated, but"—the landlord shrugged—"he had no desire to go back then, and he ran to the priest's house. They returned a little after midnight, but there was nothing to do except cover the Englishman's face."

"How did he die?" I asked.

"That, Monsieur, my grandfather would never say."

Obviously the matter could not be allowed to rest there. I happened to remember that a friend of mine knew someone of the name of Rotherham, and since the name is not altogether common I wrote asking if he could give me any information on the subject. A week later I was rewarded by the arrival of a bulky package.

The Rotherham my friend knew was a son of the nephew to whom our Mr. Rotherham wrote, and enclosed were the letters, diary, and documents from which the preceding narrative has been pieced together.

"B—— made no objection to lending them," my friend wrote. "All except the letters were returned to his father, as the nearest surviving relative, after his great-uncle's death. He says there was one thing among the personal effects which puzzled his father a good deal. It was found clutched in the unfortunate man's hand, and was a square gold medal, rather old and tarnished, with part of a heavy gold chain attached to it. On one side was an inverted crucifix, and on the other a clock face without hands, or from which the hands had been removed. B—— tells me that he got it out to look at some time

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ago, but took such a dislike to it that he had it destroyed."

On the day following the arrival of this letter—it was August 23rd—I went out in the afternoon to the Château de l'Echarpe. The door of the mausoleum had been bricked up, but in other respects it was exactly as Mr. Rotherham had described it. I found the present caretaker, a pleasant young man who wore a black beret and smoked a cigarette.

"I am sorry, Monsieur," he said, "but—"

"But you're going away," I put in, "and won't be back until the 25th." And I explained my reasons for thinking that this would be so.

When I had finished, he nodded and looked at me shrewdly. "There is still an hour before my train leaves," he said. "If Monsieur would like to see the portrait—?" Naturally enough, Monsieur was delighted.

My guide, who was more obliging than Mr. Rotherham's, brought me a stepladder which enabled me to study the picture at close range. It was unsigned, probably the work of a clever amateur. The insignia round Viscount Raoul de Savigny's neck consisted of a square gold medal on a gold chain. The side which was not hidden showed (you will scarcely be surprised to hear it) a clock face from which the hands had been removed. And the writing in the book was a line from Ronsard: *"J'eviterai plaisir et damnation."* ("I shall avoid pleasure and damnation.")

The summer air was good after the musty uninhabited rooms of the Château.

"And now, Monsieur, I must leave," said the caretaker. "I was here once on St. Bartholomew's day, and no money would induce me to be in this neighborhood again. It is the talking, you understand, and the mindless laughter, and the soft feeble pawing at the doors and windows . . ." He smiled suddenly. "If Monsieur will wait one moment, I will close my cottage and accompany him to the gates."

He went off, whistling, and I strolled idly toward the mausoleum. There is a thornbush which stands near the door, and although the day was windless, I saw that it was shaking violently. This induced me to change my plans and travel back to Paris on the evening train.

St. Bartholomew's day was still eight hours ahead and, looking back on it, I am fairly sure that the disturbance in the thornbush was caused by a cat. But in matters of this sort I consider it foolish to take unnecessary risks.

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 420th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . a tale of revenge and an unusual modus operandi . . .

The author, Larry S. Hoke, was 49 when he submitted his first story. He lives in Whittier, California, with his wife, two sons, and "an assortment of cats, dogs, and exotic (!) chickens." He plays chess, is an "enthusiastic amateur rock hound (!)," and cultivates a quarter-acre organic garden. Professionally, he works as an administrator in a large law office in Los Angeles . . .

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS

by LARRY S. HOKE

Dear Dorothy,

By the time you read this I'll be dead.

That should be a "shocker" but of course it isn't as you couldn't care less whether I'm dead or alive. But, you see, the thing is that you will have killed me, and I mean that literally. How you are going to do it I'm leaving as a surprise at the end of this letter, but there's no way you can keep from doing it because by the time you read this it'll be too late.

I've given this a lot of time and thought, and I'm going to set everything down here just the way it happened because you're never going to be able to show this letter to anyone and I want you to know how it was and how it is.

It all started three years ago when you were getting bored with your husband and wanted some excitement. So you picked on me, not because I was anything special but because I was available and easy to get. I'm not fooling myself that I seduced you. We both know it was the other way around. But it was nice, it was beautiful, and I fell in love with you even knowing you were just amusing yourself.

1974 by Larry S. Hoke.

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And then when you started to break it off I couldn't take it. I became obsessed so that every hour of every day was spent in thinking of you and holding imaginary conversations with you and wondering what you were doing when I wasn't around.

I left my job, but you know that. What you don't know is that I left it so I could follow you. I'd call you at work and ask if I could see you and you'd say no, you had to work late. So I'd hide in my car in the parking lot across the street and watch your window, and I'd see you leave work and go down the street to have a drink with Morris. Good lord, Morris! You could do better than Morris. Fat, fifty, and bald. A joke on the human race. And after Morris it was George. And then Peter.

So I started writing you poems. Deep sensitive poems torn from the turmoil surging through my soul. But I had to let you know how I felt, you see. I had to be honest. If you were going to make a mockery of our friendship, of my love, you had to know what I really felt.

And I did more than just follow you everywhere. I spied on your window at work. I've already told you that. I also bugged your car and your living room. I wanted to bug your bedroom, but even I couldn't stoop that low. And I hated myself every minute. I hated what you were doing to me, and I was powerless to change it. And, after all, I'd been a private investigator for 20 years. People used to pay me for what I was doing to you. Paid good money, too. Enough to keep me going since I left my job.

I hated myself but I kept right on doing it. For six months now I can account for every minute of your day. It was about a month ago that I heard you reading my poems to Jim. And laughing at them! Remember the one I wrote that started out:

> You are a hidden part of me,
> That goes where e'er I go,
> A warm spot deep inside of me,
> A happy little glow . . .

I heard you read that to Jim and I heard him say, "What did the poor creep do—swallow a light bulb?" And you laughed. You both laughed.

That's when I started thinking about how to end it all.

I knew that just my dying wouldn't affect you. You've always had that ability (which I lack) of being able to think of yourself

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first. First and foremost there's Dorothy and to hell with what other people might feel, who might get hurt, who might even die because of you.

But there is one weakness in your character: you can't stand to kill anything. Remember that time in the park? You should, since it was part of that long poem I wrote you, the one that started:

I remember little things:
Like the sweater you used to wear,
Like the way you used to sing,
And the way you did your hair.

Like that noon at Echo Park
Where we walked and sat a while,
Like the way the day was dark
Till I saw your morning smile.

That day in the park you stepped on a beetle and it really broke you up. You just couldn't stand the idea that you had squashed something, that you had killed something. That's what gave me my great idea.

You see, dying isn't so terrible. Not for the person who dies. I'll be out of my misery then. I won't be following you around and spying on you and having my guts churn because you've made it plain you can't stand the sight of me.

The funny thing is that I still love you. That really is funny. Not "ha-ha funny" like you and Jim found my poems, but "sick funny" like laughing at someone as he breaks his leg. So if I love you, how can I give you this one final hurt? And it will hurt. Selfish as you are, it'll hurt you to know you killed me.

How can I do it? Because I won't be around to start feeling sorry about what I've done. And maybe I don't love you any more. Maybe I'm so sick I can't tell the difference. All I know is that I'm going to do it. Tonight.

You want to know how, don't you? Even now, as you read this letter, you have killed me but you don't know it. That's the beauty of the plan. You get this letter and then you find out that you've killed me and then you find out tomorrow that I'm really dead. Three little steps.

Tonight is Friday. On Fridays you always stay an hour late until everyone else in the office is gone and then you and Peter

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get in the elevator and ride it down to the basement floor and go out through the basement entrance to that little bar we used to go to.

But there's something you don't know about that elevator. In that old building you work in (remember how we used to brag that we worked in the oldest building in Los Angeles?) all the elevator machinery is on top of the elevator. The elevator itself comes within a half inch of resting on the cement floor of the basement. And I know how to open those basement elevator doors.

I'm going to watch your window until I see you and Peter turn out the lights. Then I'm going to run to the basement, open the doors, and lie down on the cement floor. You'll push the basement button (I remember that you always insisted on being the one to press the button), the elevator will come down, and I'll be dead.

My misery will be over and yours will start.

Goodbye, Dorothy
Harold

"Hey Dorothy, did you see the item in the paper this morning about some guy getting crushed by the elevator in your building? Crushed so bad they can't even begin to make an identification. You do work in the Figueroa Building, don't you?"

"Yes, that's my building. I thought that elevator acted funny last night. It wouldn't go all the way down. Gee, that's weird. How would anyone get crushed by that elevator? Don't you think that's weird, Jim?"

"Yeah. Sure is. By the way, speaking of weird, you got a letter this morning from that weirdo, Harold. I recognized his writing on the envelope."

"Well, I don't want to read it. Throw it away."

"I already did."

"Good. Maybe he'll give up one of these days. Hey, how about going out for breakfast? There's a new Sambo's just opened down the street. Ought to have pretty good pancakes there."

"Q"

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 421st "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . An unusual first story that all the readers on our staff agreed has a "special quality" . . .

The author, Claudia E. Ruster, was 57 on the day our letter reached her—"a lovely birthday present," she wrote, "that raised my morale marvelously." Mrs. Ruster and her husband are retired, live in "Halfway," and both write. "My husband writes history and seems to know just what he wants to say. Simply goes to his typewriter in the morning and does it. I marvel —because I'm the spasmodic type. I do a page or two and then I have to go to work in the garden for a while. Or bake or sew. As an absolute last resort, I'll clean house—anything to put off the hard job of finishing a story . . ."

Well, Mrs. Ruster, we can't promise it will become any easier, but we can promise that you will find the "hard job" increasingly rewarding . . .

HALFWAY CANYON

by CLAUDIA E. RUSTER

Midway down the coast from Carmel to Big Sur is a place called Halfway Canyon. A county road runs through it, its meager gravel path all rocks and mud in winter and pure washboard in summer. But when the frosts and rains are over, the sun comes out and brings on an absolute pandemonium of lupin and paint brush, wild laurel, poppy, flowering currant, and forget-me-nots. And high on the canyon's sides the pines and the redwoods sing, always.

Along the creek are vacation cabins, refuges for a fortunate few. Those too close to the stream get pretty damp come flood time, but the Navajo rugs have usually been hung on the rafters and the sofas and chairs jacked up. Besides, it dries out. Smells better, too. Washed house with flaming driftwood in

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stone fireplace—heaven!

It's a natural place, on its own most of the time. Even the hippies pass it by. Halfway? they say; forget it. In the winter the cold runs you out; in the summer, the squares ditto. It's one of Progress' undiscovered paradises and if you're very lucky you get to go there and refresh your soul.

When Henry and Clo came up the summer of '69, they came to stay. The doctors had given Henry a year to live, amazed he'd lasted this long, and he and Clo decided to retire. Sold the store, the house, the second car, the TVs, everything they did not positively have to have, and you can believe it, that was the garage sale to end all garage sales!

"Hey, you sure you gonna like living here year round?" Henry asked when they were all moved in.

"What else?" Clo answered, "Can you think of a nicer place for us to die?"

"What's with the 'us?' What are you talking about?"

She shrugged.

"What's the matter with you?" Henry demanded. "You're not sick! You're not old! It's *me! I'm* the one who's here to die!"

"Don't kid yourself, kid," she smiled at him. "When you go, I go."

"Dumb broad! You could live a whole new life when you get rid of me."

She lit a cigarette. "You! You're who's dumb. Don't you know there is no life for me without you?" Waving smoke away, she clapped a hand over his mouth because he was starting with the arguments again. "I'm not old—are you kidding? Only time I'm not old is next to you. Without you —Madame Methuselah."

"Aw, listen," he said softly, pulling her onto his bony knees. "You got a whole book of Disneyland tickets you haven't used yet."

"Listen yourself," she cried into his mouth, wrinkled lips wrinkling his. "Don't go without me, dammit! Please, baby, don't leave me here alone."

"Dumb broad." He dumped her. But his eyes when she looked into them were smiling, wet. "Okay," he whispered, shaking his head, "okay," and stomped off the porch. "Now, where the hell are my tree cloppers? Man tries to keep a decent place around here, can't find a damn thing!"

So they made a plan. When the pain got bigger than he was, they'd take the pills together. They'd drive down to the beach, Tschaikovsky playing on the cassette—no, better yet, Puccini—at sunset, and oh! their wedding clothes on.

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"Nothing like the stink of mothballs to speed a fella on his way."

"All right, smarty pants, I'll get them out now so they'll be aired and fresh. Camellias in the pockets and sweet peas, maybe."

"Oh, brother, you have got to be *the* corniest—"

But you could tell he loved it. They spent hours planning. It would be the most beautiful thing they'd ever done in all their 38 years together. Perfect, he twitted her, period. The End.

And then one night before the year was even up, he turned around and, by God, went and did it without her. She was so mad she could hardly make herself go for the doctor. She got over it, though. Turned out he didn't do it on purpose. Didn't even know what hit him. Old heart just gave out, is all.

Well, he's not getting away with it, Clo grumbled. Soon as I take care of all this business, I'm going, too. And dammit, kid, you wait for me!

But I don't know. After the funeral and the insurance people (what little insurance there was) and Henry's son, Buddy —it was next month before she could even sit down by herself to think. And then, what with one thing and another—the quail, for instance. The fledglings were just beginning and Clo had promised herself for years to be in on a first flight. Also, it was the year those brown irises were supposed to bloom and when you've blown a buck fifty apiece for the fool things, you ought at least to *be* there. She hadn't played the new Beverly Sills album yet, either. And —oh, hell, kid, I guess it's just all those unused tickets, like you said.

Another thing—it's not all that easy to do, either, now you're not here to help.

So she stayed on at Halfway, the marvel of the others. And the envy. Their own visits were governed entirely by vacation times and long weekends. Clo loved the wintertime Halfway, "her" Halfway, but after two years she did get lonely. Especially after the deer stopped coming, and the raccoons.

That Buddy. She ought to be grateful because he wasn't even really related—only by marriage. But the way he fussed over her! Made her put in the phone, put in the furnace, called every Sunday from L.A. And the last thing before he was transferred to Louisiana or wherever, he brought her that crazy hound. You got to have protection, he told her, all these robberies and murders going on!

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Perro, she called the hound, because she and Henry had always been planning to go to Mexico one of these years. They never got there but she still had the phrase book and that's how you say dog. Clo and Perro loved each other to pieces but he was about as much watchdog as her Japanese wind chimes. All he did was be there. But that was enough to keep away the deer and raccoons. And Clo missed them.

Don't misunderstand, though. Pretty fine having somebody fuss over you that way when you were getting on and didn't have another soul in the world. She *was* grateful, but it was just that he was trying to change her—for her own good, she realized, but that didn't make her like it. What it amounted to, he wanted her to be scared. She didn't want to be scared and it infuriated him that she didn't want to be. They just didn't see eye to eye, was it.

Late one December night he had driven up without telling her he was coming. Two o'clock in the morning and there she was, lights on all over the house, curtains wide open, and running around in her underpants. He was all the way through the door before she even noticed him.

"Damn it," he said, "I could have been a psycho on the loose!"

"Buddy, how nice!" She pulled a cookie sheet from the oven. " 'Scuse me, hon, lemme get this other tray in."

He fell into the chair in a rage. "Do you realize—!" And on and on and on.

Clo just kept filling his glass between putting cookies in and taking cookies out. When the cookies were all done and every flat surface in the entire three rooms—and bath—was covered with cookie sheets, she reached into the closet for her slacks.

"Between the oven and the furnace," she apologized—sort of, "it gets so hot in here—"

"Clo, there isn't another human being within three miles of here. If anything should happen to you—" He was trying to be calm. "At the very least you should have had the door locked and the drapes drawn."

"But if there's nobody around—" No, she could see that didn't sit well with him. "I guess what happened, honey, was I was up to my elbows in dough when the sun went down and I just never got around to—"

"You have been at this since five o'clock in the afternoon?"

Oh, boy. She looked at the clock for some reason. What did he want from her? "Well, actu-

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ally, it was more like four. Maybe even three thirty." Buddy jumped up and slapped his forehead. "Well, sweetie, the days are pretty short this time of year, you know." He pounded the table. "Buddy, I have to get them done, don't I?"

The upshot of it all was Perro. At the very least, Buddy said, now when somebody came to murder her, Perro could bark and she could go put her pants on.

That was last year, and here it was almost Christmas again. The cookies were baked, decorated, boxed, and stacked in the station wagon. Tomorrow she'd drive over to County Hospital and take them around to the children. It was the high point of her year. This year it was the high point of her life. Because, at last, God willing, she had finally made up her mind. Time after time she had tried to do it and time after time she had chickened out. But this time—well, you see, she *had* to.

It wasn't only the loneliness. There were other reasons. Stuff she'd rather die than tell anybody about. That's a good one, she chuckled. Her teeth, for instance. What teeth? And her eyes. Those old bifocals of Henry's didn't do her any more good than if they'd been Saran Wrap. And the shaking and trembling. And who knew? Maybe she even had some fatal disease. God knows she hurt enough. Between the shakes and being half blind, it took three times as long to do the cookies, and she had ruined a whole bunch of them, at that. A complete and total waste.

And that was the other thing: money. There wasn't any more. Oh, Clo knew if Buddy knew, he'd set her up like a maharanee. But, uh, uh, not this kid.

So when it happened she was in the middle of her final preparations. Very efficient, very organized, she was, too. She'd even made a list. Do this, do that. Back and forth, back and forth, she went, her red-lace Christmas pettipants twinkling in the undraped windows. Stooping now to straighten a book on a shelf, reaching now to put into the bag anything she thought she could pawn —the crystal vase, the silver frames; pausing now to watch memories in the flames; singing words, any words, to the radio's carols. Help me, kid, help me get there.

Number one, her list said: pawnship, cor. Alvarado & Franklin, open 9 A.M. Get money. Number two: SPCA, Salinas Hwy. Leave Perro & money. Number three: hospital. Cookies. Number four: come home, bathe, dress. Number

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five: sunset. Drive to beach, take pills, wait.

Wait, that was the hard part. God, give me strength. God, help me this time. Hurry night, hurry day, help!

But it wasn't even dawn yet. She was lying on the sofa saying goodbye to her house and wondering how soon Buddy would sell it when the carols stopped. News came on. She sat up to change stations. Who needed news? She twirled the dial.

". . . crazed gunman . . . escaped prisoner . . . six dead near Big Sur . . ."

She snapped it off. That for you, she said, adding the transistor to the pawnables. Outside, the two things happened at once. The gunshot and Perro's scream.

Clo waited on the sofa, her eyes on the open doorway.

"Did you have to kill my dog?" she said quietly as the man stepped in.

He twitched around to face her. "Sorry 'bout that, granny," he smiled, moving forward. " 'N now, looks like I gotta kill you, too."

"Oh, mister," Clo laughed. "Be my guest!"

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THE REGIMENT OF ROGUES; or, The Most Heinous Crime

by J. F. PEIRCE

Montague House
London, England

Mr. Ellery Queen
229 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10003

Dear Ellery:

Herein is the fourth human drama in which Will Shakespeare acted the role of detective. The crime confronting him then confronts us still today. When will we learn the lessons that history teaches?

I have begun to think of myself as a detective. To be a successful scholar, one has to be a detective. The two go hand in hand. A scholar has to look for clues, then draw conclusions from them once he finds them. It's pure ratiocination. That's how I discovered that Shakespeare was both an amateur detective and an

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apprentice in The Theatre during the seven lost years of his life.

It's also how I discovered the information concerning the case in the private papers of Lord Burleigh.

THE REGIMENT OF ROGUES; *or, The Most Heinous Crime*

Will Shakespeare, actor-playwright, sat across the desk from William Cecil, Baron Burleigh, second in power to Her Majesty, the Queen. "The reason I summoned you," Lord Burleigh said, pulling at his beard, "is that rumours are afloat that someone plans to assassinate those in power and seize control of the government. Who, where, when, why, and how—we don't know. To complicate matters, there's been a dangerous increase in the number of rogues and vagabonds in the city, and we fear that they present a danger not only to persons and property but to the Crown as well. In fact, for all we know, the two matters may be related."

The Lord Mayor, seated to his right, nodded in agreement.

"Frankly," Lord Burleigh continued, "we suspect that many of the rogues may be immigrants, part of a Spanish plot to embroil England in a war with Rome—for economic reasons. King Phillip would like nothing better."

Shakespeare looked puzzled. On being summoned to the Court, he had feared Lord Burleigh's vengeance, for he had been responsible for the execution of one of Burleigh's relatives, a favourite of the Queen. But the Lord High Treasurer set his mind at ease.

"I'm grateful for what you did," Burleigh said. "Poor relatives are an embarrassment to one in power. He can ill afford them. Had my unscrupulous young kinsman lived, he would have proved a double embarrassment. Imagine what would have happened if I were to have whispered in the Queen's left ear about matters of state while he were whispering in t'other about private matters. I could only lose in such a contest."

He shrugged, then continued. "The Queen has had trouble of late with her lovers. First, my kinsman, and now that cock of the walk, Thomas Ayne, who stole her jewellery and bedded with her ladies-in-waiting. He would have paid for it with his head had he not fled before the Knight-Marshal could find him."

"But what does Your Lordship want of me?" Shakespeare asked. "I know naught of such matters."

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"I want you to investigate the rumour for me," Burleigh said. He paused and again pulled at his beard. "There are rival factions in the government. Some would like nothing better than a war with Rome or Spain. But the Queen and I are determined to keep England at peace. Someone outside the government is needed, therefore, to ensure that we learn the truth. I chose you because of the way you handled the affair of my unfortunate kinsman. Do you have any questions?"

Shakespeare nodded. "Do the rogues and vagabonds not have licences or passports, Your Lordship?"

"Aye. But most are so cleverly forged that the members of the Watch cannot detect the forgery."

Shakespeare nodded. He possessed a forged passport himself that he had obtained on fleeing Stratford-upon-Avon.

"Not that it matters," the Lord Mayor said, making a tent of his fingers. "The constables of the Watch are so old and infirm that *they* skulk in the shadows while the thieves and strumpets go boldly about their business. Crime has doubled in every parish save one. There it has decreased."

"And where is that, Lord Mayor?"

"In Cheapside. You may wish Justice Hex and Constable Blunt of that parish to assist you in your investigation."

"How many more arrests has Constable Blunt made than in the past, Lord Mayor?"

"I believe fewer."

"And how many men has Justice Hex ordered whipped or bound over for the Assizes?"

"Fewer, also."

"Could they be in league with the rogues and vagabonds, Lord Mayor?"

The Lord Mayor nodded.

Lord Burleigh kept pulling at his beard. "Investigate them, as well. Now, can you enlist anyone to help you? I'll supply you with all necessary funds."

"I could get some of the players, Your Lordship," the playwright said. "There are always more hanging about The Theatre than are needed. Mr. Burbage has us double up on parts to save money. I have played six roles in a single play, and not all of them small ones."

At the mention of players, the Lord Mayor started to protest. His antipathy towards them was well known. But when Lord Bur-

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leigh nodded, the Lord Mayor said nothing.

"From what I've observed," Shakespeare continued, "rogues oft band together for protection and to intimidate their victims. I could form my own Regiment of Rogues. We could disguise ourselves and join the real rogues in their crimes—that is, if you can guarantee our protection against prosecution."

Burleigh nodded.

"Is there any district where rogues congregate in large numbers?" the playwright asked.

"Aye. In Billingsgate. There's much food there. No doubt they forage among the leavings."

"There's as much food at the Cheapside Market, Your Lordship. Perhaps there's another reason for their increase at Billingsgate," Shakespeare suggested.

"And what might that be?" Burleigh demanded.

"The fact that it's near the Tower. Is anyone being held there whom someone might wish to set free?"

Burleigh and the Lord Mayor exchanged glances, then looked at the playwright with increased respect.

"Among others, Anthony Babington and John Ballard, who were involved in a plot to assassinate the Queen and myself," Burleigh answered. "They wished to release Mary Stuart from prison and restore her to the throne. Sir Francis Walsingham's spies discovered the plot, and Walsingham was responsible for their capture."

"Perhaps Walsingham is right," the Lord Mayor said.

"In what, Lord Mayor?" Shakespeare asked.

"In advocating a direct attack against Spain, a course of action that Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Leicester also favour."

"As you can see," Burleigh said, "the Lord Mayor and I aren't the only ones who fear a Spanish plot. So I'll back your notion and double the guard at the Tower." Picking up a quill pen, he made a note on a sheet of foolscap before him.

"Does there appear to be a leader amongst the rogues, Your Lordship?" Shakespeare asked.

"Aye. A rakehell rogue called Cock Lorell. But it may not be his true name. 'Lorell,' as you may know, means 'villain-in-chief' or 'rascal'."

The playwright nodded. "What does he look like, Your Lordship?"

"We don't know. One hears about him, but he's never seen."

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"Which suggests that he may not exist, that he may be but a figurehead, Your Lordship."

Burleigh nodded. "Is there aught else you need besides money?"

Shakespeare thought a moment before answering. "Aye. Licences for begging. I'll send you the names of the players as soon as I recruit them. The licences should appear forged. Then if some rogue sees them, he'll take us for his fellows. And tell whoever makes the licences to be sure they're folded every way and have greasy backsides to suggest how long they've been carried."

Burleigh made another note on the sheet of foolscap. "Anything else?" he asked.

"Perhaps some silver plate we can pretend to have stolen."

Lord Burleigh turned to the Lord Mayor who coughed. "I do have a few pieces taken from thieves who were hanged," he said. "They're in my private apartment—for safekeeping."

Lord Burleigh pushed up the ends of his moustache with the backs of his index fingers to conceal a smile.

Shakespeare arrived at the chambers of Justice Jennings of Shoreditch as Constable Sackbutt was showing three beggars out the door: Dog, a big man with huge hands and vacant eyes; Ferret, a rodent-like cutpurse; and Penitent, a creature in rags with a patch over one eye, a stump of an arm, and a pegleg.

Constable Sackbutt welcomed the playwright and took him to Justice Jennings, who greeted him warmly. "What can I do for you, Will?" he asked.

"Have you heard of a rogue called Cock Lorell, Your Honour?" the playwright asked.

Justice Jennings shook his head, causing his jowls to quiver. Then he growled, "Wait! Let me think on't!" After a moment, he nodded. "There *was* a rogue, a rude fellow with his hat pulled down all around, who tried to take the measure of my loyalty to Her Majesty. But when he discovered I was four-square for her, he fled 'fore I could have him detained and flogged. He said he represented a Cock Lorell, but I suspect that he was Lorell himself."

"Has there been an increase in crime in Middlesex, Your Honour?" Shakespeare asked.

The Justice raised his shaggy eyebrows and looked more than ever like a dyspeptic bulldog. "God's blood!" he exclaimed. "There are thieves and beggars everywhere—like the three who just left."

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"What have Dog, Ferret, and Penitent done now?"

"A bit of cony-catching at the expense of an elderly couple. Luckily I was able to get their money back for them."

"Why did you not send the rascals to prison?"

"Because the couple wouldn't press charges when they learned that the beggars could be whipped, have their ears cut off, or be hung at the discretion of the Assizes."

"The laws are too harsh!" the playwright protested.

"Aye. As a result, few constables will attempt to arrest criminals stronger than themselves—for fear it will be *they* who are whipped or lose their lives."

Constable Sackbutt bobbed his head in agreement.

"And when a man begs from hunger or steals to feed his family," the Justice said, "most justices are loath to assess such severe penalties."

"I can understand why the lame, the halt, and the blind beg or steal," Shakespeare said, "but why do strong men become rogues and beggars?"

"Because there isn't enough work for everyone. Some men must beg, steal, or starve. That's why laws have been passed to control them. The sturdy are forbidden to wander without passports, and the impotent are forbidden to beg without licences. But why wouldn't a man beg when he can get more from a day's begging than he can from a week's hard work? Besides, work is the worst punishment some men can imagine."

Later, at The Theatre, Shakespeare enlisted Will Sly, Dick and Cuthbert Burbage, and a number of other actors in his Regiment of Rogues, then sent Dick Burbage with a list of their names to Lord Burleigh.

"How do you plan to find Cock Lorell?" Sly asked.

"I don't," Shakespeare answered. "I plan to let *him* find me. Tell me, how would you go about killing the government's leaders?"

Sly laughed. "That's easy! I'd invite them to dinner and feed them my wife's cooking."

"I'd send them to meet their maker at night," Cuthbert Burbage said. "I'd kill them in bed."

"How could you be sure they'd be in their own beds or that the person there was the bed's owner?"

"Would it matter? And how would *you* do it?"

"With gunpowder. I'd blow up the Houses of Parliament when

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they're in session and the Queen in attendance."

Shakespeare found Dog, Ferret, and Penitent at The Crown of Thorns seated at their usual table. Dog and Penitent greeted him in a friendly fashion, but Ferret snarled at him suspiciously. "What do *you* want?" he demanded.

"Information."

"You get only hard knocks for nothin'!" the beggar said.

Taking a shilling from his purse, Shakespeare put it on the table.

Ferret passed his hand over the coin and made it disappear. "What do you want to know?" he asked.

"All you can tell me about thieves and rogues."

"There's a difference?" Ferret asked, his eyelids narrowing. "Go to prison! You can learn more villainy *there* than in twenty dicin' houses, bowlin' alleys, or brothels."

Penitent laughed and banged the stump of his arm on the table. "The jailer at Newgate will give you a bed for four pence, an' you give Ferret three-times that. How do you think thieves an' trulls avoid the Watch? They hide out in Newgate, which ol' Dick Whittington remembered in his will. Go there—"

"Some fools talk too much!" Ferret snarled ominously.

Dog stared at his huge thumbs.

"There *are* things I can tell you," Ferret said, "but you'll have to forget where you heard 'em."

Shakespeare nodded. "Mainly I want to learn thieves' cant, and how thieves work together."

"The leader's an Upright Man. The rest are Rufflers. They beg from the strong an' rob the weak. Most have their own specialties, such as paillards, who fake sores by bindin' ratsbane to their flesh, an' Abraham men, who pretend madness. Some are peddlars; others, balladmongers, who—"

"Tell me about them."

Ferret shrugged. "They sing ballads, then sell copies. An' their nips note where the purchasers put their purses—to pick their pockets."

"An' if a man don't buy a ballad," Penitent added, "the 'monger warns him 'gainst pickpockets, an' the gull feels for his purse revealin' where it's hid."

"And what can you tell me about cony-catching?" Shakespeare asked.

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"All there is to know, includin' every way one can cozen, or cheat, some poor gull through deceit or fraud. The easiest is to cozen him at cards. Decoy, for example."

He coughed dryly and looked at his empty tankard.

Taking the hint, Shakespeare ordered drinks for the beggars.

"Now what can you tell me about Cock Lorell?" Shakespeare asked when Ferret at last finished.

"Nothin'!" Ferret said, looking quickly about, as did both Dog and Penitent.

Shakespeare took another shilling from his purse and put it on the table.

Again Ferret's hand passed over the coin, but this time when he took his hand away, there were two coins on the table. "Take your curst money an' leave us alone!" the little man whispered.

That evening as rushlight candles cast dancing shadows on the Tiring Room walls, Shakespeare instructed the players, then sat down to write out their parts, while the players planned their costumes and makeup.

The next morning, leaving the actors to rehearse, Shakespeare set off for Cheapside dressed as a beggar, with blood on his face and mud on his clothing. As he limped along, he encountered a band of boys playing football with a blown-up bladder.

Spying the beggar, the boys stopped playing, and one of them ran off up Bread Street while the rest fell silently in behind as the playwright limped past.

Though the boys were small, their number and the way they followed soundlessly caused Shakespeare to shiver. He was looking back to see if they were still following him when a big man stepped from the doorway of The Mermaid Tavern and seized him.

"Who are you? What do you want?" the playwright demanded.

"I'm Constable Blunt, and I'm taking you to Justice Hex, so come quietly!" the big man commanded.

Shakespeare smiled. His goal had been easier to achieve than he'd expected. Glancing back, he saw the boys retreating silently down Bread Street.

Justice Hex's chambers were in Milk Street. The Justice himself was a lean, hard man with the look of a Puritan. "Well, Constable," he said, "whom have we here?"

"Hamnet Hathaway of Arden, according to his passport, Your Honour."

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"Is it valid or forged?"

"Forged, Your Honour. It says he has brown eyes and hair, and as you can see, his eyes are hazel and his hair is auburn."

"Well, Hamnet Hathaway, if that be your name," Hex said, "what are you doing in Cheapside?"

"Looking for work, Your Honour."

"*Hard* work?"

"Not particularly, Your Honour," the playwright said with a grin. But the grin faded in the face of the Justice's brown-bent disapproval.

"What can you do?"

"My father was a butcher and a glover, Your Honour. I helped him at both as a lad."

"Can you carry a side of beef?"

"If I have to, Your Honour."

Justice Hex turned to the Constable. "Take him to Durning, the butcher," he said as if pronouncing sentence. "Tell Durning to put him to hard work, then make arrangements for him at the almshouse."

"The almshouse, Your Honour?" Shakespeare said.

"They'll give you a bed there till you find one of your own—or flee our hospitality."

Two days later, dressed as a courtier, Shakespeare strolled Billingsgate Market. Though his ears were alert for stray bits of gossip, for the most part he heard only the foul language of those who worked there. He walked slowly, carefully, for each time he made a sudden move, he paid for it in pain caused by the unaccustomed labour he had performed for Durning, the butcher, till he had taken Justice Hex's hinted advice to flee.

The stench of the market was overpowering, and from time to time Shakespeare held a pomander to his nose and sniffed its crushed flower petals to gain relief from the stench. His mind was a confusion of images to which he attempted to give a sense of order.

Beggars stuffed coins into pregnant purses. Rogues helped fishmongers fill huge baskets with fish, then assisted liveried servants to carry their heavy loads to their master's households—no doubt in hope of reward.

Stopping briefly, the playwright spoke to a friendly fishmonger. "What time of the day do you do the most business?" he asked.

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" 'Twixt nine and eleven."

"And what day do you sell the most fish?"

"Why, Friday, of course!"

Shakespeare continued to question the fishmonger, asking how long rogues had been frequenting the market, how many there were, and what they did during the day. Then, seemingly as an afterthought, he said, "And what can you tell me of Cock Lorell?"

The fishmonger, who had been talkative till then, turned suddenly silent and busied himself at a task he'd already finished.

Shakespeare shrugged, then resumed his stroll. From time to time as he walked along, first one and then another actor passed purses to him. And as the actors took turns playing the parts of Balladmonger, Nip, and Gull, he seemed to have a sizeable following. For after each performance, the players would go to a house Shakespeare had rented nearby and change costumes and characters.

During the afternoon, despite the pain it occasioned him, Shakespeare walked briskly to the Tower to see how long it took. The guard, he noted, had been doubled since his visit to witness young Cecil's execution. Seeing nothing else out of the ordinary, he returned to the market.

The afternoon passed quietly except for an attempt by a rogue to pick the playwright's pocket. Immediately, two armed men appeared, seemingly from nowhere, and began to beat the rogue unmercifully.

"God's wound!" Will Sly, who played the rogue, complained to the actors beating him. "Easy, lads! Easy! 'Tis but a performance."

By the time the actors dragged Sly off, a crowd had gathered. And without seeming to, Shakespeare studied its members. Though some of the beggars had faked sores and their stomachs and purses bulged, others bore the marks of wanton hunger. And their sores wept, though they could not.

The poor are rich only in the ills of the world. Shakespeare thought. *They have an abundance only of wounds and warts, trials and tribulations.* Then another thought struck him: *Why do rogues whose purses bulge work in such a foul-smelling place for so little?*

That evening the actors turned to playing Decoy at various taverns. And though, unlike his brother, Cuthbert Burbage was not known as an actor, he gave an increasingly convincing per-

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formance in the role of the drunken Barnacle, until Shakespeare discovered he was not acting and sent him off to bed.

The next morning as Shakespeare again strolled the market, he was approached by a beggar wearing a large hat turned down all around and a high-standing collar that hid the lower half of his face. Though his face told the playwright nothing, his hands, his voice, and the way he swaggered told Shakespeare a great deal.

"Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?" the rogue asked, giving a courtly bow.

"Men call me Cephalus," the playwright said.

"The hound fated to catch anything it pursued?"

"Aye. And you are Cock Lorell."

"How did you know?" the rogue demanded, obviously taken aback.

"I have 'ears' everywhere. I've heard much about you."

"And I have 'eyes' that have seen much that has interested me. Would you care to become one of my lieutenants?"

"Nay. But I'll make you one of mine."

Lorell threw back his head and laughed. "This bears discussion," he said. He cocked his head to one side and bobbed it twice quickly. "Come! Join me in a drink at a tavern."

"Aye. So long as it's a tavern of my choosing."

Again Lorell laughed. "Though I may appear poor," he said, "I can give you the world."

"And *I* can give *you* Eternity," Shakespeare said, touching his sword.

In a tippling house, later, Shakespeare and Lorell fenced with words. Each tried to penetrate the other's disguise. They spoke obliquely, in sentences freighted with innuendo. Questions were answered with questions until Shakespeare finally said, "Enough! Come to the point! What do you want? What do you offer?"

Lorell nodded. "You're right," he said. "I'll have to trust you. What would you say if I were to tell you that one day soon I will be King of England?"

Shakespeare frowned. "I would say that *how, when,* and *why* need to be answered."

Lorell laughed, then cocked his head to one side and bobbed it twice quickly. "The *how* I'll not tell you. To be truthful, I don't trust you completely. As to *when*, I'll only say soon—on some Friday. As to *why: 'Forma bonum fragile est; quantumque accredit ad annos, Fit minor; et spatio carpintur ipsa suo.'* "

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Shakespeare shrugged. "You'll have to translate. I've little Latin and less Greek."

"It's a quotation from Ovid. 'Beauty is a fragile good. As it grows it decreases and is devoured by its own years.'"

"And what does it mean in this application?" Shakespeare asked, frowning.

"That I was betrayed by a woman old enough to be my mother—a woman more beast than beauty. And I will be revenged upon her."

"I'll let that pass for the moment," Shakespeare said, his frown deepening. "How can you become King without an army?"

"But I have an army."

"The rogues of the market?"

"And elsewhere."

"I would hesitate to stake *my* life on them."

"Do not underestimate them. They may fool you in a fight. They're a rowsey, ragged rabblement of rakehell rogues, and they've nothing to lose and everything to gain."

"But you have much to lose, I warrant. Your head, for example."

Lorell laughed. "Nay. There's no danger. I'll take over during an absence of power."

Shakespeare narrowed his eyelids. "The *why* still bothers me," he said.

Lorell cocked his head and bobbed it quickly. "Look about you! The poor starve! The rich waste our substance! The working man has his back broken by taxes to support them both! The Queen is a canker in the side of the nation! As Ovid said, *'Immedicabile vulnus, Ense–'* Pardon! 'The wound that will not respond to medicine must be cut away.' Come, join our adventure!"

Shakespeare looked thoughtful. "I'll have to consult with my men. Where can I find you to give you our answer?"

Lorell laughed and again cocked his head to one side and bobbed it quickly. "A good try, friend Cephalus," he said, "but I'm a student of life, of Whittington College. As Ovid said, 'He who has lived hidden has lived well. Deception rules all things.' I'll meet you here at this time to-morrow—after my men have searched the area and assured me that you've come alone."

"Well," Burleigh said, coming to the point quickly, once Shakespeare was seated, "is there to be an attack on the Tower?"

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"No, Your Lordship."

"Then what pot of porridge do the Spanish have cooked up for us?"

"None, Your Lordship. It's a kettle of fish prepared by your own cook you need fear. There's a plot to poison the fish at Billingsgate Market."

"Why? What would that accomplish? Who would want to poison all who eat fish?"

"Not all, Your Lordship. Just those in power. The Queen and yourself, for example."

Lord Burleigh fell back in his chair.

"If those in power were murdered in a way that suggested food poisoning," Shakespeare continued, "men ready to take over could do so easily in the absence of power. And the fishmongers would pay with their lives for their assumed carelessness, in a bloodbath designed to take the people's minds off the fearful events that were occurring."

"But how could they poison us without poisoning everyone who eats fish?" Burleigh demanded.

"How are the fish procured for your table, Your Lordship?" the playwright countered.

Burleigh pulled at his beard. "The cook sends some lackey to Billingsgate to fetch them."

"Could anyone recognise that he's your servant?"

"Aye. If he recognised my livery."

"What if the lad grew used to some rogue helping him at the market? Could not the rogue poison the fish if the lad's attention were distracted?"

Burleigh nodded. "But all my household might be poisoned!" he protested. "Not just me!"

"Would that matter to one who thirsts for the heady wine of power? Besides, it would disguise the fact that you alone were the intended victim."

Burleigh frowned. "But how could anyone be certain that all those in power would eat fish on a given day?"

"Because we still have the Catholic habit, Your Lordship."

"What Catholic habit?"

"Of eating fish on Friday."

Burleigh nodded. "I see!" he said.

"Some Friday when Cock Lorell sees your servants at Billingsgate," Shakespeare continued, "he'll signal his men. A fight will

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start. And during this diversion your fish will be poisoned. And with you and the Queen and our other leaders dead, Lorell will seize power."

"But who *is* he?" Burleigh demanded.

"I don't know, Your Lordship. He's a gentleman in his early thirties, well educated, charming, and persuasive. He has a habit of cocking his head to one side and bobbing it, like this." Shakespeare mimicked Lorell's mannerism. "And he's given to quoting Ovid in Latin."

"God's blood!" Burleigh exclaimed. "It's Thomas Ayne, 'Cock Ayne of Cock Lane,' as he's called. His actions remind people of a cock, and he's cocky enough to play on't. This explains everything. He's one of the Queen's former favourites. He betrayed Her Majesty, then accused her of betraying him. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Two, Your Lordship. One, I'd have him arrested."

"Aye. But where is he to be found?"

"I suspect in Newgate prison. He said he's a student of Whittington College, which I take to be a reference to the prison, which Dick Whittington supported in his will. The jailer there is said to take bribes."

Burleigh nodded. "I'll send the Knight-Marshal to arrest him, and the jailer as well. And your second suggestion?"

"That you give up fish on Fridays."

Burleigh smiled grimly. "What of Hex and Blunt? Are they involved, too?"

"No, Your Lordship. Hex has persuaded the Cheapside merchants they will have to feed their poor one way or t'other and that the least painful form of taxation is to give them jobs or be 'taxed' e'en more through thievery. He's set up an almshouse for those unable to work and secured jobs for those who are. It is hard work that has driven most rogues from the parish."

"Then it's Cock Ayne we need fear, not rogues and vagabonds. Once the head is lopped off, the centipede will die."

"Not necessarily. Some insects can regenerate lost parts, Your Lordship. What must it do to men to see others no more deserving possess all this world's goods while they have nothing? It could lead them to commit desperate deeds. Something must be done to aid these men or I fear what they might do—for many of them come from good stock and have both the brains to plan villainy and the audacity to carry it out. Treason's a terrible crime, but

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the most heinous is poverty—and *poverty* can be made to rhyme with *treachery.*"

FINIS

Well, Ellery, toward the end of Elizabeth's reign the laws governing the poor were revised. I wonder if Shakespeare was, in part, responsible?

No doubt this case gave him the background for Autolycus, the rogue in *The Winter's Tale,* and for the escapades of that greatest of all rascals, Falstaff.

With warmest personal regards,
Frank

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If this magic story gets on your nerves, it's supposed to—on your nerves and in your nerves . . .

THE MAGIC CARPET

by CELIA FREMLIN

IT was not Hilda who first talked of being driven mad up there in the high flats, far above the noise of the traffic and the bustle of the crowds. On the contrary, it was her neighbors who complained to *her* about the stresses. "It's driving me up the wall!" said her neighbor on the right; and "I can't stand it any longer!" said her neighbor on the left; and "I'll go out of my mind!" said the woman in the apartment below.

But not Hilda Meredith. Hilda was the young one, the busy one. From the point of view of the neighbors it was she who was the cause and origin of all the stresses. *She* wasn't the one who was being driven mad, oh, no! That's what they would all have told you.

But madness has a rhythm of its own up there so near to the clouds—a rhythm that at first you would not recognize, so near is it, in the beginning, to the rhythms of ordinary, cheerful life. . .

"What's the *time*, Mr. Wolf? What's the *time*, Mr. Wolf?" Thumpty-*thump*-thump-thump. Thumpty-*thump*-thump-thump. The twins' shrill little voices, the thud of their firm little sandaled feet, reverberated through the door of the kitchenette and brought Hilda to a sudden halt in the midst of the morning's wash. Her arms elbow-deep in warm detergent, she just stood there, while the familiar, helpless anger rose slowly from the pit of her stomach.

She would have to stop them, of course; the innocent, happy little game would have to be brought once more to a halt by yet another "No!" And quickly too, before Mrs. Walters in the flat below came up to protest; before Mr. Peters on the right tapped on the wall; before Miss Rice on the left leaned across the balcony to complain of her headache and to tell Hilda how well children were brought up in *her* young days.

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Miss Rice's young days were all very well; in those days children had space for play and romping. If they were rich they had fields and lawns and nurseries and schoolrooms; if they were poor they had at least the streets and the alleyways. But today's children, the sky dwellers of the affluent Twentieth Century, where could *they* go to run, to shout, to fulfill their childhood?

All day long, up here in the blue emptiness of the sky, Hilda had to deprive her children, minute by minute, of everything that matters in childhood. They must not run or jump or laugh or sing or dance. They must not play hide-and-seek or cowboys and Indians or fling themselves with shrieks of joy into piles of cushions. Except when she could find time to take them to the distant park, they must sit still, like chronic invalids, growing dull and pale over television and picture books.

"What's the *time* Mr. Wolf? . . .One o'clock. . .Two o'clock . . .Three o'clock!" Thumpty-*thump*-thump-thump. Hilda had a vision of the sturdy little thighs in identical navy shorts, stamping purposefully round and round the room, little faces alight with the intoxication of rhythm and with the mounting excitement of the approaching climax.

Before this climax—before the wild shriek of "*Dinnertime*, Mr. Wolf!" rent the silence of the flats, Hilda would have to go in and spoil it all. "Martin, Sally," she would have to say, "you really must be quieter. Why don't you get out your coloring books and come and sit quietly? Come along, now, over here at the table." And she would have to watch the bright little faces grow tearful, hear the merry chanting voices take on the whine of boredom, watch the firm taut little muscles relinquish their needed exercise and grow flaccid as they sat and sat and sat. It was wicked, it was cruel . . .

"Mrs. Meredith? Could I speak to you for a minute, Mrs. Meredith?"

So. Already she had left it too late. Here was Miss Rice out on her balcony, hand on brow, headache poised like a weapon, and already sure of her victory.

"It's not that I want to complain," Miss Rice began, as she began every morning, "and if it was just for myself I suppose I'd try to put up with it, but it's Mrs. Walters, she hasn't been too well either, and it's driving her up the wall, it really is, all this hammer, hammer, hammer. She's just phoned me, asked if I could

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have a word with you, save her coming up the stairs with her bad knee."

Bad knees. Headaches. Not-too-well-ness. These were the weapons by which happy little four-year-olds could be crushed and broken; there was no defense against them.

"I'm sorry," said Hilda despairingly; and again, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. . . ."

The twins had been settled at their coloring books for nearly an hour before Mrs. Walters below rang up to inquire if Hilda couldn't somehow stop that boom-boom noise?

"Boom-boom-*boom*," the clipped voice mimicked on the wire. "It goes right through my nerves, Mrs. Meredith, it really does. I can't think what they can be doing, little kiddies like that, I can't think what they can be *doing*."

Firing a cannon? Riding roller coasters round the room? No, it turned out to be Sally's energetic rubbing out of her drawing of a cat. It wobbled the table, it set the floor vibrating.

"No, Sally, don't use the eraser any more, just color it as it is, there's a good girl."

"No, Martin, you must keep your dinky-car on the *rug*. Mrs. Walters will hear it on the linoleum."

"No, Sally, leave that chair where it is—we don't want Mr. Peters knocking on the wall again."

No. . .No. . .No. . . Two lively little creatures reduced to tears and tempers, to sobbing, hopeless boredom.

Nevertheless, it wasn't Hilda saying, "I can't stand it!" It was Miss Rice. And Mr. Peters. And Mrs. Walters.

Autumn passed into winter, and it was less and less often possible to take the twins to the park. Their bounding morning spirits had to be crushed earlier and earlier in the day. The search for a quiet game, for something that wouldn't annoy the neighbors, became a day-long preoccupation for Hilda; but in spite of all her efforts nothing, *nothing* seemed quiet enough; for still, without respite, came the voices from above, from below, from every side: "Really, Mrs. Meredith, if you *could* keep them a little quieter. . ."

"Mrs. Meredith, I don't want to complain, but. . ."

"Mrs. Meredith, sometimes I think it's a herd of elephants you've got up there. . ."

"It's not that I don't love kiddies, Mrs. Meredith, but that's not the same as letting them grow up little hooligans, is it, Mrs. Meredith?"

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"It's my head, Mrs. Meredith."

"It's my nerves, Mrs. Meredith."

"I've not been feeling too well, Mrs. Meredith."

So, no. . .no. . .no. . .all through the gray November days. No, Martin. Stop it, Sally. *No*. No, no, no! The twins grew whiny and quarrelsome. Their sturdy little legs looked thinner, their faces paler.

And still it wasn't Hilda who said, "I can't stand it!" It was Miss Rice. And Mr. Peters. And Mrs. Walters.

It was the new carpet that gave Hilda the idea—the new square of carpet bought to deaden the sound of footsteps in the hallway. It was not really new, it was second-hand and somewhat worn, but the twins were enchanted by it. They had never seen a Persian carpet before, and for a whole afternoon there was silence so absolute that not a word of complaint came from above or from below or from either side.

From lunchtime till dusk Martin and Sally crouched on the carpet examining every brown and crimson flower, every purple scroll and every pinkish coil of leaves. Hilda felt quite lightheaded with happiness—a whole afternoon with the twins truly enjoying themselves and the neighbors not complaining!

"It's a *magic* carpet," she told them hopefully, when she saw their interest beginning to flag. "Why don't you sit on it and shut your eyes, and it'll take you to wonderful places? See? Off it goes! You're flying off above the rooftops now, you're looking down, and you can see all the houses and the streets and the trains—"

"And the zoo!" chimed in Sally. "I can see the zoo and all the nanimals. I can see tigers and lions—"

"And now we're over the sea!" squealed Martin. "I can see the whales and the submarines and—and—oh, look! Look, Sally, I can see an island! Let's stop at that island, let's go and live there!"

The game took hold. The perfect quiet game had been found at last. Hour after hour the twins would sit on the magic carpet and travel from land to land, seeing strange and wonderful sights as they went. They would land in Siberia or at the South Pole or on a South Sea Island, where wild adventures would befall them, and they only escaped in time to fly home for tea.

But their favorite destination of all was Inkoo Land. In Inkoo Land there were tiny elephants just big enough to ride on; there

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were twisty knobbly trees, wonderful for climbing, trees from which you could pick every kind of fruit in the world. There were wide spaces of grass to run on, there was a jungle to play hide-and-seek in, there were monkeys that talked monkey language, and Sally and Martin learned it too, with fantastic speed and ease; and then they played with the monkeys, swinging from branch to branch through the green sun-spangled forests.

But always, in the end, they had to come home; they grew tired of sitting even on a magic carpet; and the moment they disembarked and set foot on the floor the voices would start again, from all around—

"It's my head, Mrs. Meredith."

"It's my nerves, Mrs. Meredith."

"It's not what I'm used to, Mrs. Meredith, it's making me ill, it really is!"

If only they could stay in Inkoo Land all day! Such a lovely game it was—there were moments when Hilda caught herself thinking how good it was for them, on the gray winter afternoons, to have all that exercise, rushing through the sunny glades, and climbing about in the forest trees. So much better for them than the steely winter park, with its asphalt paths and "Keep Off the Grass" signs.

Then she would recollect herself, smile a little wryly at her own childishness in getting so caught up in her children's fantasies, and set herself to preparing tea ready for their "return."

But at last, inevitably, the novelty of the game began to wear off: the "return" became earlier and earlier; and one day, a gray hopeless day of fog and cold, the twins refused to go to Inkoo Land.

Hilda was conscious of sickening, overmastering despair. They *must* go to Inkoo Land! In vain she pleaded, bribed, even scolded. But go to Inkoo Land they would not.

"We've got nothing to *do*, Mummy," the old cry began again; and as if at a prearranged signal the voices returned—

"It's my nerves, Mrs. Meredith."

"It's my head, Mrs. Meredith."

"I don't want to complain, Mrs. Meredith, but—"

"The doctor says I need rest, Mrs. Meredith."

The voices seemed to go on and on, whispering in the air, sighing in through the window, seeping in under the doors—and suddenly Hilda knew what she must do.

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"I'll come with you to Inkoo Land," she declared. "You must show it to me—I've never seen it, you know."

The twins' interest was at once revived; they scrambled eagerly onto the magic carpet.

"Mummy come too! Mummy come too!" they chanted; and when they were all seated on the carpet Martin gave his orders in a clear little treble. "Inkoo Land, please!" he told the carpet; and they all clutched each other against the tipping and rocking to be expected as the carpet lifted itself off the floor.

But what had gone wrong? The carpet didn't move at all! Hilda stared stupidly round the walls that still enclosed them.

"Say it again, Martin!" she urged him; and a little surprised, the child obeyed.

Still nothing heppened. Hilda felt her heart beating strangely. Was it too heavy for the carpet, having to carry an adult as well as the two children? Or—why, that was it! They should be near a window! How could they expect to fly if there was no window to fly out of? Jumping up, she hurried into the living room and opened the window wide to the foggy winter air.

"Bring the carpet in here!" she called, and hurried out to help drag it in from the hall.

She was surprised to see both looking a little frightened. Sally's lips were quivering. "Play properly, Mummy," she said; and "Oooo—it's cold in here!" complained Martin, as they laid out the carpet in the living room, now slowly filling with swirls of icy fog.

"Never mind. We'll soon be in Inkoo Land," Hilda encouraged them. "Onto the carpet, both of you. We'll soon be in the lovely warm forest, with the sun shining, and all the monkeys and the elephants. Say the words, Martin; say them again."

And still the carpet didn't move. The three of them together must definitely be too heavy, decided Hilda; they would have to help the carpet. One could see how hard it must be to lift the whole lot of them bodily off the floor; but if they were to give it a start by launching it off the window sill, then it would be able to glide along easily above the rooftops.

But why were the twins crying? Backing, hand in hand, away from the window, refusing to help as she dragged the unwieldy carpet onto the ledge of the open window?

What a floppy sort of magic carpet it was! How it hung, limply, half in and half out of the window, dangling down on either side! But of course it

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would stiffen as soon as it began to fly. She climbed awkwardly onto the ledge and sat, as well as she could, balancing, on the carpet-covered sill.

She began to feel excited. In a minute now she would be in Inkoo Land. Instead of this chilling fog, there would be a tropic sun beating down upon her; leaves on the great trees would shimmer in the golden light; bright tropical flowers would be there, and luxuriant creepers; and she would see her little twins romping joyously at last, running, shouting, jumping in the sunshine, far, far from the complaining voices.

"*Mrs. Meredith!*" came the shocked voice of Miss Rice, leaning out of her window; but already it seemed far, far away, a little thread of sound from the world of fog and chill which Hilda was leaving. "To Inkoo Land!" she cried to the carpet, and together they launched forth from the High Flats into the swirling silver emptiness of the sky. . .

It was warm in Inkoo Land, just as she had known it would be; and there was grass and great forest trees and the sun shone. The grass was like great sweeps of lawn, and once or twice the twins had come, to run about on it and laugh and shout and turn head-over-heels, just as she had imagined. But mostly it was people like herself, wandering slowly among the trees; and other people, in white coats, moving more briskly. And several times Miss Rice had mysteriously appeared, a quite changed Miss Rice, crying, and saying, "If only we had known!" and "When you come back, dear, everything will be different!"

Miss Rice, it seemed, had saved her "in the nick of time"; but somehow Hilda couldn't think about that just yet, or about the long, long problem that lay behind. Enough, for the moment, to be in Inkoo Land, and to know that, sooner or later, she would return, just as the twins had always returned, in time for tea.

"Q"

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Something special to signal the start of the Sherlockian season . . . first publication in the United States of a brilliant piece of Holmesian hijinks by the Literary Editor of "Punch" . . .

THE CASE OF THE DANISH PRINCE

by MILES KINGTON

ACT I

Baker Street, No. 221B.
Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES *and* DR. WATSON

Holmes. Were all the fiery demons of the nether world
To blow their poisonous smoke up into London,
Compound it with a yellow hue and take
Away our light, they could not make a fouler day
Than we have now.
Watson. It's foggy out?
Holmes. It is.
A wretched, vile, and tedious kind of morning,
And nothing in the post but thanks from Scotland
That I did solve the sudden death of Duncan,
Not to mention Banquo. No doubt by now
You've written up the case and had it published?
Watson. A little five-act tragedy, with notes
On some of the more striking details.
Holmes. And blood,
And fights, deaths, witches, ghosts, and all
The melodrama that you inflict on logic,
I'll be bound. Once I'd seen the importance
Of having, not two murders, but three,
The rest was simple. Have you read the paper?
Watson. Only the "Morning Post." King Lear's
Still lost. A fascinating trial in Venice.
A case of changed identity in Verona.
And sundry goings on in Windsor. Nothing else.
A noise on the stairs

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Holmes. But here, unless I'm much mistook, comes one
That needs our aid. A case at last!
Enter to them HAMLET
Hamlet. Which one . . .
Holmes . . . . Of us is Holmes? 'Tis I. This gentle here
Is Watson, my devoted friend and colleague.
Hamlet. Good morrow to you both. You do not know me . . .
Holmes. Apart from knowing that you are a prince,
From Denmark, I would hazard, and a solitary,
That you take snuff, have lately been at sea,
Were frightened by a horse at five and now
Are sitting for your portrait, you are a stranger.
Watson. Good heavens, Holmes!
Hamlet. Do you have magic powers?
Holmes. Sheer observation. You do wear a crown
And are a prince. You have a Danish accent,
Your shoes have late been knotted by a seaman,
There's snuff upon your ruff, and on your doublet
Some Prussian Blue flicked by a careless painter.
That you do not frequent society
Was clear because you did not knock the door
When entering, and then did leave it standing ope.
Watson. But, Sherlock, what about his childhood fright!
Holmes. Come, come, dear Watson! Lives there yet a man
Who was not frightened by a horse at five?
Hamlet. All that you say is true, and yet I fear
You cannot guess my problem. To be brief,
My father was the King of Denmark, where
Now reigns his brother, my uncle, Claudius,
With as his wife my mother, the late Queen
And Queen again. Sir, I implore your aid.
Holmes. The grammar's convoluted, but I think
I have the picture. I have the answer too.
The wrong man reigns—*you* should have climbed the throne.
Hamlet. No, no, that's Danish law, to instate the brother,
Not the son. What I seek to know
Is how my father was so cruelly murdered?
Holmes. Your father murdered? Are you sure of this?
Hamlet. Quite sure. My father's ghost has told me so.
Holmes. I see. *(Aside)* Quick, Watson, get your gun. This man's
A raving lunatic. *(To* HAMLET*)* You have a suspect?

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Hamlet. I fear the foulest of my uncle, Claudius.
Holmes. No evidence?
Hamlet. Except that he poured poison
Into the ear of my poor sleeping father.
Holmes. How know'st thou this?
Hamlet. The ghost did tell me so.
Holmes. Hmm. *(Aside)* A talkative ghost. Would that he were
Admissible in a court of British justice. *(To* HAMLET*)* This case is not without its points of interest.
Within a day or two, sweet prince, I may well be
With you in Denmark.
Hamlet. My thanks! *(Exit)*
Holmes. Or there again
I may well not. I've better things to do
Than listen to the babblings of mad youths
Enter CLAUDIUS, *disguised*
Claudius. Have I the honour to address the well-known Holmes?
Holmes. You do not. That is my trusty colleague Watson.
Watson. Hello.
Claudius. Hello. And was that man outside
Young Hamlet, Prince of Denmark?
Holmes. So he said.
Claudius. And did he spin you some far-fangled tale
Of how his uncle had contrived his father's death?
Holmes. That was the drift.
Claudius. Pay him no heed. He has
A most ingenious mind, but little sense.
Holmes. Indeed, Your Majesty?
Claudius. You guessed?
Holmes. Of course.
You too did leave the door ajar, and wear a crown.
Are there many more like you at home?
Claudius. Nevertheless I swear there's nothing to it.
Remember—you come to Elsinore at your peril.
Exit CLAUDIUS
Holmes. Better and better! I think it would not hurt
To spend a day or two at Elsinore.
Watson, look up the boats and see which leaves
To-morrow morning on the Danish line.
Watson. Right ho.

* * *

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ACTS II, III, IV, and V

Denmark.
Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES *and* WATSON
Watson. A draughty castle this, Holmes, where a man
Could catch his death of cold. I'm glad I brought
My tartan rug.
Holmes. I thought your kilt looked odd . . .
I wouldn't be surprised if Hamlet's father
Froze to death. But look! What shape is this?
Enter HAMLET'S FATHER'S GHOST
Ghost. For you to be in Denmark is not meet.
Go now, and get you back to Baker Street.
GHOST *vanishes*
Watson. I think he's right, Holmes; I do fear that he
Came from the other world to give us a warning!
Holmes. (With lens) Then why did he leave prints in this soft earth
Of hunting boots, size ten, one broken heel
And marks of clay upon the instep? Tell me that.
Enter HAMLET
Hamlet. 'Tis good to see you, Mr. Holmes. Have you
Found aught that might reveal the murderer?
Holmes. A clue or two. But tell me, Prince, is there
A man who served your father at the court
Of whom I might a few light questions ask?
Hamlet. Alas, alas, one such there was, but he—
Polonius, I mean—has just been stabbed i'th'arras.
Watson. Sounds painful. Is this a Danish malady?
Holmes. And does he live?
Hamlet. No, sir, his life has ebbed.
Holmes. Most interesting. And tell me, Hamlet, too,
If Claudius should die, have you a queen?
Hamlet. I would have had, in fair Ophelia.
Holmes. You would have had? You mean . . .
Hamlet. She's also dead.
Watson. I told you that the castle was unhealthy.
Holmes. I think I start to see some light amid the gloom.
I'll take a walk and meet back in our room.
A graveyard with diggers.
Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES

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Holmes. Good fellows, may I talk with you and ask
What is't you do?
1st Digger. Why, sir, 'tis meet we dig, though 'tis not meat
We dig, but bones, of that we make no bones,
And then into this hole we place the bones,
Though being bones they are not whole . . .
Holmes. Here's five bob.
2nd Digger. To answer questions?
Holmes. No, to stop thy puns.
Here's five bob more to answer questions with.
Now, tell me straight, is business good or bad?
1st Digger. Not bad, not good. Not good for us, but good
For those that stay alive. 'Tis many a year
Since we did have good digging, people live so long.
Holmes. Except for Hamlet's father.
2nd Digger. A one-off job.
Since then, nothing. Still, it may pick up.
Ours is a dying business . . .
Holmes. I said, no puns!
1st Digger. We're sorry, guv. That's one of our favorite ones.
In Elsinore Castle.
Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES *and* WATSON
Holmes. You know my methods, Watson; when in doubt
Eliminate th'improbable—what is left
Must be the truth howe'er unlike it seems.
Watson. So you have always said, but still I am
In some uncertainty over the murderer's name.
Who was it?
Holmes. I'll tell you presently,
But first I expect some news. This may be it.
Enter to them FORTINBRAS
Fortinbras. Alack! What a dreadful day! The heavens themselves
Could no more cease from weeping than the sea . . .
Holmes. Come, pull yourself together. I have not time
To listen to long speeches. What's your news?
Fortinbras. Hamlet is dead!
Holmes. I thought as much. Go on.
Fortinbras. And Claudius! Laertes! Also Gertrude!
Holmes. The whole bang shoot, in fact. That's life.
Or, as my digger friend would say, that's death.

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Watson. You have an Australian friend?
Holmes. Sometimes, Watson,
I wonder if I'm really in detection
Or the better half of an awful music hall act.
Fortinbras. O heavens, weep! . . .
Watson. He's off again.
Holmes. You asked
Just now what was the murderer's name.
I told you. Eliminate all else
And what is left . . .
Watson. You mean, it's Fortinbras?
Holmes. No, no, he's just the man who brings the news.
The gravediggers. Their trade was bad and threatened by
Redundancy, so they conceived a plot
To slay the highest in the land and profit
By their piecework. Only one mistake they made,
To imitate the ghost and wear their boots the while.
I wrote a monograph on soles you may have read.
Watson. May God have mercy.
Holmes. Mercy on what?
Watson. Their soles.
Holmes. That settles it—let's leave this cursed place
Where none do ope their mouths but they do utter puns.
Besides, I have a telegram for Lestrade in the Yard
Begging for my help in some new case.
Watson. What says he now?
Holmes. "Othello's wife is dead.
We found her lying lifeless on her bed."
Watson. No sooner is one case accounted for,
Than we go chasing after . . .
Holmes. Don't say it!
Watson. . . . some Moor.

SHERLOCK HOLMES *knocks* WATSON *to the ground.*
Exeunt omnes.

CURTAIN

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THE JURY BOX

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

Nobody in this job should expect too much. Even when my luck brings more than one worthy item in a given month, I can't hope for balance: that fair-play detective novels, say, will match an equal number of thrillers. But once or twice the miracle occurs, the scissors snip a rounded pattern, and for February (*mirabile dictu!*) two detective novels hold our scale-pans level against two superior adventures in espionage.

Though the sleuths are no better than the spies—you may even prefer cloak-and-dagger—let's begin with detection because that has always been our custom.

Far from being instruction or advice, *Gently with the Ladies* by Alan Hunter (Macmillan, $5.95) refers to Chief Superintendent George Gently, ace investigator of Scotland Yard.

Clytie Fazakerly, wealthy wife of parasitic idler John Fazakerly, is battered to death in their luxury flat after a hundredth violent quarrel with her husband. Though few doubt this waster's guilt, Superintendent Gently remains unconvinced.

Temperamental Clytie, short for Clytemnestra, may well have been slain by a woman. There's arrogant Sybil Bannister, with whom she had a lesbian affair. Brenda Merryn, her half-sister and probable heir, has been John Fazakerly's mistress. We hear much of Sarah Johnson, Fazakerly's current mistress. And always in shadow lurks elusive Beryl Rogers, unseen almost to the end.

Gently, at heart something of a romantic, treads the maze amid conflicting evidence. He himself is tempted by the flesh; crisis succeeds crisis, including a near-suicide above rooftops, before Gently traps the murderer in this well-plotted mystery with every clue in sight.

A different kind of detective, a different background for very different action, pleasantly characterize Arthur D. Goldstein's *You're Never Too Old To Die* (Random House, $5.95).

Amiable, sharp-witted Max Guttman, seventy-two-year-old New York manufacturer, has retired to live with his daughter and her

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family in California. His days he spends at the Golden Valley Senior Citizens' Center, a peaceful haven where elderly ladies and gentlemen can foregather.

Sometimes peaceful, yes. Rich resident Samuel Cohen, falling in love with almost-as-old Miss Walters, dies of a heart attack as soon as they become engaged. When the lady swears her *fiancé* was murdered, nobody in authority will believe her. Whereupon Miss Walters dies, too.

Detecting against his will, Max Guttman sees light through a murk of emotional conflict. "Sherlock Holmes I ain't," Max has declared. Yet in true Baker Street tradition he interprets the design and snatches off somebody's mask. Let's hope we meet him again.

Michael Lord, protagonist of *The Man with Two Clocks* by Whit Masterson (Dodd, Mead, $5.95) must rank among the most sympathetic amateur agents ever blackmailed into espionage.

Young Lord, brilliant nuclear physicist, has invented a classic secret weapon called Airbrush. With university work he enjoys, with a wife he adores, Lord walks straight into nightmare. Ruthless Emlyn Shade, National Security, inexplicably prepares charges of treason.

A certain three-months' vacation, actually spent in the woods with his old friend Ben Flagg, he is accused of spending elsewhere and in Russian hands, betraying Airbrush's secret. Witnesses say they never heard of Ben Flagg, as well as other nonsense which makes Lord reel. He can clear his name, he learns, only by undertaking a dangerous secret mission to a Russian research station in the Antarctic.

Excitement mounts at that frozen waste. He matches wits with the KGB's best agent, slippery Vasily Nikitin. He finds an answer to all perplexities. His triumphant return, climaxed by one final stunning surprise, rounds out the work of a master storyteller who belongs at the very top.

Derek Lambert's *The Yermakov Transfer* (Dutton, $7.95) features a Russian plot to kidnap the head of the Soviet Union for the one cause most men regard as just.

Though I have left insufficient space, it may be said that Derek Lambert draws Russian characters as vividly as he draws the American newspaperman or the British blonde in this fast-paced drama of intrigue. Another A-1 choice for your list.

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a *NEW* Ponsonby story by

ALAN K. YOUNG

We all know that some magic tricks are done with mirrors. Sometimes the solution to a crime is also a magic trick, and sometimes it too is done with mirrors . . . Another case of "instant detection" by Professor Amos Ponsonby of Briarwood College . . .

INCIDENT ON A BUS

by ALAN K. YOUNG

The clock on the Briarwood campus tower was striking midnight as Amos Ponsonby, Professor of English Emeritus, alighted from his taxi in front of the Briarwood Police Station. A few giant snowflakes drifted down through the radiant circles of the street lamps to lose themselves in the foot-deep drifts.

"Help me up the steps?" responded Ponsonby to the cabby's inquiry. "Why the devil would I want you to help me up the steps?"

The cabby shrugged, accepted his fare and ten-cent tip and drove off; the indignant octogenarian, planting each foot firmly before abandoning his purchase on the other, mounted the ice-slick steps muttering angrily to himself.

As he pushed through the door into the station lobby, Sergeant Huey came forward to greet him, brimming with apologies for the hour, the weather, the temerity of dragging Briarwood's most distinguished amateur sleuth out into such a night.

"But with Chief Decker out of town, I'm not quite sure how to handle this, Professor, so when Dr. Logan asked if he could phone you instead of a lawyer I jumped at the idea. Because I know the poor guy's never been in any trouble like this before, but unless I can persuade the Riggs kid to drop her charges tonight it's going to be all over

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town by morning, and that's not going to help his reputation none. Or the college's either."

"Well, suppose you begin, Sergeant," said Ponsonby, calmly divesting himself of muffler, overcoat, and sweater, "by telling me just what it is that Dr. Logan is supposed to have done. According to the rather breathless message delivered to me half an hour ago by my housekeeper, Mrs. Garvey, he visited his lust on a twelve-year-old virgin in the back seat of a municipal bus. But having known Dr. Logan for forty years, I find that very hard to believe."

"It's not quite that bad, Professor," said the Sergeant, suppressing a grin, "but I'm afraid it's bad enough. Karen Riggs is actually eighteen and she knows her way around—we've even picked her up once or twice for soliciting—and of course Dr. Logan didn't actually do anything but put his arm around her shoulders and try to nuzzle her neck, but—"

"Schuyler Logan nuzzling a young lady's neck on a public conveyance? Preposterous!" snorted Ponsonby.

"I'd have said so myself, Professor—Lord knows he doesn't look the type—but besides Miss Riggs herself there are two eyewitnesses, a guy named Murphy and a gabby old lady named Willet, who both swear she's telling the truth. And they were the only ones on the bus besides the driver."

"How about the driver?" asked Ponsonby. "Does he support the girl's story?"

"No," replied Sergeant Huey, "but he doesn't dispute it either. He was approaching an intersection when it happened so he couldn't turn around and look, and the windshields on these new municipal buses are slanted to eliminate reflection. And by the time he stopped the bus and turned around it was all over. But I suppose you'd like to talk to Dr. Logan and hear his side of it?"

Which was, purely and simply, that he didn't do it. "I swear to you, Amos," said the tall gangling Chairman of Briarwood College's Fine Arts Department, whose rumpled hair and disheveled clothing bespoke his ordeal of the past hour, "I didn't so much as speak to the young lady before she launched this outrageous charade! I was sitting next to the aisle, you see, even though there were only a few of us on the bus, because I find that in winter if one sits next to the window one so easily takes a chill. And the first thing I knew, this young lady had climbed over the back of my seat and plopped herself down

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beside me in the seat next to the window, and before I could even ask what she was about, she grabbed my arm and pulled it up over her head—as though it were around her shoulders, don't you see?—and then began the most ridiculous caterwauling about being attacked by a dirty old man. By which she was referring to *me*, Amos, if you can believe it!"

"I *do* believe it," said Ponsonby. "Or rather," he added hastily, "I believe that in all probability you are the victim of an audacious extortion scheme. But the question is, my dear Schuyler, how do we prove it?"

Ponsonby turned to Sergeant Huey; the three men were ensconced in the Chief's office. "What's the normal procedure in a case like this, Sergeant?"

"Well, Miss Riggs will enter a preliminary charge tonight and each of the witnesses will make a statement—they're dictating them to one of my officers right now—and then I'll have to keep Dr. Logan here until I can get hold of a judge to set his bail. Then in a couple weeks they'll have to appear in court—Miss Riggs to make a formal charge and Dr. Logan to answer it."

Ponsonby nodded. "Several weeks—plenty of time for the young lady to approach Dr. Logan with a cautiously veiled offer to drop her charge in return for a modest compensation." He turned to Logan. "Tell me, Schuyler, was the fact that you were on that particular bus on this particular evening in any way unusual?"

Dr. Logan looked surprised. "As a matter of fact, no, Amos. Wednesday is my chamber music night—I play the viola in the Briarwood String Quartet and we get together every week at the Odd Fellows' Hall. That's where I was returning from tonight."

"On a bus," said Ponsonby, nodding his satisfaction, "that is probably always as close to being deserted as the one tonight, and I suspect you are often seated next to the aisle. Don't you see, Sergeant? The young lady undoubtedly was familiar with Dr. Logan's movements from having observed them on previous Wednesday evenings; she had picked her victim with care, and knew exactly where and when to stage this spurious attack."

Sergeant Huey frowned uncertainly. "I'd say so, too, Professor, if it weren't for the two eyewitnesses, but I just don't know how to account for what they saw."

"What they *claim* they saw," observed Ponsonby dryly. "Tell

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me, Sergeant, does either of these wit—"

The door to the Chief's office slammed back against the adjacent file cabinet with a report like a pistol shot as Karen Riggs gusted into the room on a wave of cheap perfume and peppermint chewing gum.

"Hey you, Sergeant, what's the big idea keeping me sitting around all night to give my story? *I'm* the injured party, you know, not this here dirty old man. So suppose you get off your duff and tell me what I gotta do to put the old freak behind bars so's I can get on home!"

As the Sergeant sought to calm her, Ponsonby studied the girl: the young legs emerging from beneath the miniskirt were undeniably shapely, but they were almost the only thing about her that struck him as genuine. Her hair was too yellow, her lashes were too long, her cheeks too pink, her lips too red and, yes, even her bosom was too pronounced to be quite real. Yet somehow, in spite of all the blatant camouflage, an air of extreme youthfulness, almost of vulnerability, peeped through.

Sergeant Huey managed to get her calmed down and out of the room with firm assurances that his investigation would be finished soon.

"Well, Professor," he said as he came back into the office, "can you suggest any way I can avoid having to book Dr. Logan tonight? Because once I do it'll be on record for the reporter from the *Herald* to see, which means it'll be as good as all over Briarwood."

Ponsonby had dropped into the oversized swivel chair behind the absent chief's desk. He glanced sympathetically at Dr. Logan who stood by the window, obviously still shaken by Karen Riggs's boisterous entry, but it was the officer to whom he spoke.

"Tell me, Sergeant. Do you think it would be possible for me to have a brief word with the two witnesses tonight?"

"I guess it would be okay, if they have no objections."

"Good. Then let's have the woman in first, shall we? And Schuyler, why don't you go downstairs and have a cup of coffee while you're waiting? This shouldn't take more than a few minutes."

But Mrs. Maud Willet, once started, bade fair to keep going all night. She was a short dumpy woman of 50-odd years, with bright blue eyes and naturally red cheeks that made her look unusually girlish, in spite of the gray hair that seemed bent on escaping in every direction from under her

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small hat—little more, actually, than a floppy red-cloth rose. Her mouth moved even faster than Karen Riggs's, but without the motivation of chewing gum; Mrs. Willet chewed only on words.

"I can't tell you when I've been more upset, Professor your honor," she said, the cloth rose nodding at Ponsonby across the desk as she bobbed her head in emphasis, "because I can tell just by the look of him that poor Dr. Logan is a gentleman, and Lord knows that young snippet is no better than she should be what with all that green eye shadow and them silver nails and that scandalous little skirt—why, there's not enough there to make a decent head scarf—and I don't doubt for a moment she was egging him on back there, whispering dirty stories in his ear and God knows what, but all that don't change none what I saw.

"I'd been out to Sisters of Mercy visiting my poor sister—gallbladder, the doctors say, but if you ask me they're just saying that to cover up the fact they don't know *what* she's got. Because I ask you, whoever heard of anyone with their gallbladder in their legs, which is where Mabel's main discomfort is, all the pain and swelling and all, and I said to her tonight, I said, Mabel, if you go and let them cut you open to look for gallstones when they can't even tell you— Pus? *What* pus? She never said anything to me about—"

"*Bus*, Mrs. Willet!" pleaded Ponsonby again. "Tell me about the *bus*. Do you recall whether or not the others were already in their seats when you boarded?"

Mrs. Willet pursed her lips thoughtfully for a moment. "Yes, it seems to me they were, now that you mention it. I sat down on the right-hand side along about the middle of the bus and the old gentleman and that little hussy were behind me on the other side, about ten rows back, and the other gentleman was on that side too, but sitting up close behind the driver."

"And to the best of your recollection were Dr. Logan and Miss Riggs sitting side by side?"

"Yes, it seems to me they were. Not that I really paid them any never mind, of course—I'm not one of your prying busybodies, and if the two of them had just been back there necking I'd not have stuck my nose in, even though I think there's places and places for that sort of thing. And Lord knows there's enough of it going on nowadays—why, there was a show on the TV just last

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night, I tell you, Professor your honor, I sat there wondering what the world is coming to when respectable people will sit and watch—"

"Mrs. Willet!"

"What? Oh, yes. Well, I was thinking we were almost to my stop and I was peering out my window trying to see if it was or not, because there's two places coming back from Sisters of Mercy where the bus comes uphill to an intersection, and one of them's out at Gillmore Avenue and the other one's my stop at Ninth and Claymore, and I have to pull the cord halfway up the hill or these smart-alecky bus drivers'll like as not go whipping right on by for half a block or more—"

Ponsonby groaned.

"—and usually I can tell my stop easy enough because there's a bar on the corner with one of them neon signs going all the time, but tonight the snow was so thick I couldn't see hardly at all, so I was peering out my window trying to see if I could spot the neon sign up ahead when all of a sudden for some reason I come aware of what was *in* the window instead of what was outside it, if you follow me.

"You know how it is on these lighted buses at night with the windows all like mirrors, and of course I could see that whole end of the bus and I saw the old gentleman trying to put his arm around the girl and it looked to me like he was trying to bite her neck or something, and I could see she was trying to push him away, and I hardly had time to think to myself how disgraceful it was to be carrying on like that on a public bus when all of a sudden she started to scream and the gentleman up front comes running back to pull him off and we had a rare set-to for a few minutes there, I tell you! So I guess my sister won't prattle on so much about her silly gallbladder tomorrow when she hears what *I've* been through!"

"I should think not," said Ponsonby, sighing. "But I wonder if you'd mind waiting a few minutes while I have a word with Mr.—?" He glanced inquiringly at Sergeant Huey.

"Murphy," said the Sergeant. "Mike Murphy. He's a foreman on the late shift up at the Northwood Steel Plant who was on his way home from work. And he's still pretty steamed up over the part of it *he* saw."

"Wha'da-ya mean I didn't see anything?" demanded Mike Murphy angrily a few moments later. The steel worker was a big man, ruddy-faced and balding, who seemed to overflow the folding chair on which he sat, across the desk from Ponsonby.

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"I saw enough—*more'n* enough! I heard the little lady screaming and I turned around and there was this old coot with his hands all over her, trying to put his arm around her neck and trying to get a kiss, so I goes back and yanks him off her and I wasn't too gentle about it, neither. There's too damn many of these crazy old coots running around the streets nowadays pawing young girls. no older'n me own daughter, if you ask me!"

"Yes, yes," said Ponsonby patiently, "but my point is that everything you saw *followed* Miss Riggs's initial scream. Thus you saw her trying, or so it appeared to you, to disentangle his arm from around her neck, but you cannot, in truth, testify to how it got there in the first place."

"I heard her screaming, for Pete's sake! What more do you want?"

"I merely want to discover the truth of what took place. If the Sergeant here were to turn his back, I could grab your arm and shout at you not to hit me again, but that certainly wouldn't constitute proof that you had already done so."

"Look, Professor Whatever-your-name-is. I know what I heard and I know what I saw and I ain't about to let that dirty old coot get away—"

"What you saw and heard, Mr. Murphy," said Ponsonby tartly, "in no way proves Dr. Logan to have been guilty of anything! Indeed, it is now quite obvious to me that he has been the victim of an outrageous extortion plot, and I am merely trying to determine if you were a part of that scheme or simply an innocent dupe."

"Wha'da-ya mean, part of an extortion scheme?" asked Murphy, glancing uneasily from Ponsonby to Sergeant Huey and back again.

The Sergeant, too, was staring at Ponsonby. "You said *obvious*, Professor. Does that mean you can prove it?"

"Yes, Sergeant, I can. At least, I believe I can persuade Miss Riggs to drop her charge against Dr. Logan, even without any monetary inducement. Perhaps if we could have the others in again?"

The two women entered the room with their mouths still moving at full speed—Mrs. Willet's as she denounced to the escorting officer the deplorable state of the municipal buses, Miss Riggs's as she worked out her unabated indignation on a mouthful of chewing gum. Dr. Logan followed them in in silence.

Karen Riggs tossed her hair and swung her hips and slid onto a corner of the desk, glar-

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ing defiantly at Ponsonby. The others took seats around the room, looking expectantly at the Professor.

"If you please, Mrs. Willet," he said. "If I may have the floor a moment, I believe we can get to the bottom of this unpleasant affair rather quickly. For it is now quite obvious, young woman, that your entire story was pure fabrication, a nefarious scheme intended to extort money—"

"Now look here, Mister," began Karen Riggs indignantly, "I don't know where you get off calling me a liar but—" She stopped abruptly, suddenly aware, as were the others, that Ponsonby had not been looking at her.

Mrs. Willet favored Ponsonby with a hesitant smile. "You're not talking to *me*, Professor your honor, for heaven's sake? Because like I've said all along, the last thing in the world I want is to get the gentleman here in trouble, and certainly not over the likes of her, but I saw what I saw and I just wouldn't feel right—"

"Poppycock!" snorted Ponsonby. "This entire scheme was obviously your brainchild, madam, and any chance it had of succeeding rested entirely on your testimony. If it were merely the unsupported word of your young co-conspirator here against that of Dr. Logan, there would be no case, for there's not a soul in Briarwood who would take her word against his; sixty years of thoroughly decent deportment in one's community should certainly count for something. A man does not become a first-time molester on the whim of a moment at the age of sixty-three.

"As for Mr. Murphy, while I'm sure his testimony is well-intended, it consists entirely of his own emotionally charged interpretation of highly ambiguous events, a fact which any reasonably astute lawyer could make clear to a judge or jury in a matter of minutes.

"No, madam, it is *your* testimony alone that lends any plausibility to Miss Riggs's charge. But fortunately for Dr Logan, in your eagerness to make it seem credible, to cloak your story in the mantle of a garrulous but good-hearted housewife, you fell into an error which proves it to be a tissue of lies. I rather imagine you were sitting on the bus expecting the little scene you knew would soon take place behind you, rehearsing in your mind how you would play your part—"

"I was not!" insisted Mrs Willet, her red rose bobbing indignantly. "I was looking out my window trying to see if it was my stop we was coming to

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when all of a sudden I looked *at* the window instead of through it, if you follow me. You must know how it is on a bus at night," she pleaded, turning to the others for support. "When it's all lit up inside like that, it makes the windows—"

"Virtually become mirrors," interrupted Ponsonby firmly. "Indeed we do know, Mrs. Willet. And we also know that when we look directly into a mirror—which is how we usually confront one—that everything *behind* us is also reflected. So it is extremely easy to forget—and in your case, madam, also quite damning—that light, and thus the image which we see, is reflected from a mirror, and thus from a window, *obliquely*. Therefore, if you were sitting near the middle of the bus peering forward out the window beside you, trying to see if you were approaching your stop, you could indeed see half the interior of the bus reflected in the window—but it would be the *front* half and not the rear. So you could not possibly have seen anything going on *behind* you."

Ponsonby sat back and folded his arms.

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Mike Murphy.

"Thank God!" murmured Schuyler Logan.

"You stupid cow!" screamed Karen Riggs. "You told me there wasn't no way this setup could go wrong!"

But Maud Willet was absolutely speechless.

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an "unknown" Sherlockian short story by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

In which Adrian Mulliner, the famous private investigator, reveals "the whole story" about Sherlock Holmes's deepest secret—in what might be called "The Adventure of the Baker Street Vampire" or "A Case of True Identity" or, simply, "The Crooked Man"...

ADRIAN MULLINER'S GREATEST TRIUMPH

by P. G. WODEHOUSE

We were sitting round the club fire, old General Malpus, Driscoll the Q.C., young Freddie ffinch-ffinch, and myself, when Adrian Mulliner, the private investigator, gave a soft chuckle. This was, of course, in the smoking room, where soft chuckling is permitted.

"I wonder," he said, "if it would interest you chaps to hear the story of what I always look upon as the greatest triumph of my career?"

We said No, it wouldn't, and he began.

"Looking back over my years as a detective, I recall many problems the solution of which made me modestly proud; but though all of them undoubtedly presented certain features of interest and tested my powers to the utmost, I can think of none of my feats of ratiocination which gave me more pleasure than the unmasking of the man Sherlock Holmes, now better known as The Fiend of Baker Street."

Here General Malpus looked at his watch, said, "Bless my soul," and hurried out, no doubt to keep some appointment which had temporarily slipped his mind.

"I had at first so little to go on," Adrian Mulliner proceeded. "But just as a brief sniff at a handkerchief or shoe will start one of Mr. Thurber's

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bloodhounds giving quick service, so is the merest suggestion of anything that I might call fishy enough to set me off on the trail, and what first aroused my suspicions of this sinister character was his peculiar financial position.

"Here we had a man who evidently was obliged to watch the pennies closely, for when we are introduced to him he is, according to Dr. Watson's friend Stamford, 'bemoaning himself because he could not find someone to go halves with him in some nice rooms which he had found and which were too much for his purse.' Watson offers himself as a fellow lodger, and they settle down in—I quote—a couple of comfortable bedrooms and a large sitting room at 221B Baker Street.

"Now I never lived in Baker Street at the turn of the century, but I knew old gentlemen who had done so, and they assured me that in those days you could get a bedroom and sitting room and three meals a day for a pound a week. An extra bedroom no doubt made the thing come higher, but thirty shillings must have covered the rent, and there was never a question of a man as honest as Dr. Watson failing to come up with his fifteen each Saturday.

"It followed, then, that even allowing for expenditure in the way of Persian slippers, tobacco, disguises, revolver cartridges, cocaine, and spare fiddle strings, Holmes would have been getting by on a couple of pounds or so weekly. And with this modest state of life he appeared to be perfectly content. In a position where you or I would have spared no effort to add to our resources, he simply did not bother about the financial side of his profession. Let us take a few instances at random and see what he made as a 'consulting detective'. Where are you going, Driscoll?"

"Out," said the Q.C., suiting action to the word.

Adrian Mulliner resumed.

"In the early days of their association Watson speaks of being constantly bundled off into his bedroom because Holmes needed the sitting room for interviewing callers. 'I have to use this room as a place of business,' he said, 'and these people are my clients.' And who were these clients? 'A gray-headed, seedy visitor, who was closely followed by a slipshod elderly woman,' and after these came 'a railway porter in his velveteen uniform.' Not much cash in that lot, and things did not noticeably improve later, for we find his services engaged by a stenog-

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rapher, an average commonplace British tradesman, a commissionaire, a City clerk, a Greek interpreter, a landlady—'You arranged an affair for a lodger of mine last year'—and a Cambridge undergraduate.

"So far from making money as a consulting detective, he must have been a good deal out of pocket most of the time. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Inspector Gregson says there has been a bad business during the night at 3 Lauriston Gardens off the Brixton Road and he would esteem it a great kindness if Holmes would favor him with his opinions. Off goes Holmes in a hansom from Baker Street to Brixton, a fare of several shillings, dispatched a long telegram—another two or three bob to the bad—summons 'half a dozen of the dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs that ever I clapped eyes on' and gives each of them a shilling, and finally, calling on Police Constable Bunce, the officer who discovered the body, takes half a sovereign from his pocket and, after 'playing with it pensively,' presents it to the constable. The whole affair must have cost him considerably more than a week's rent at Baker Street, and no hope of getting it back from Inspector Gregson, for Gregson, according to Holmes himself, was one of the smartest of the Scotland Yarders.

"Inspector Gregson! Inspector Lestrade! These clients! I found myself thinking a good deal about them, and it was not long before the truth dawned on me that they were merely cheap actors, hired to deceive Dr. Watson. For what would the ordinary private investigator have said to himself when starting out in business? He would have said, 'Before I take on work for a client, I must be sure that the client has the stuff. The daily sweetener and the little something down in advance are of the essence,' and would have had those landladies and those Greek interpreters out of that sitting room before you could say 'blood-stain'. Yet Holmes, who could not afford a pound a week for lodgings, never bothered. Significant!"

On what seemed to me the somewhat shallow pretext that he had to see a man about a dog, Freddie ffinch-ffinch now excused himself and left the room.

"Later," Adrian Mulliner went on, "the thing became absolutely farcical, for all pretense that he was engaged in a gainful occupation was dropped by himself and the clients. I quote Dr. Watson:

" 'He tossed a crumpled letter across to me. It was dated from Montague Place upon the

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preceding evening and ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Holmes,

I am very anxious to consult you as to whether or not I should accept a situation which has been offered me as a governess. I shall call at half-past ten tomorrow if I do not inconvenience you.

Yours faithfully,

VIOLET HUNTER."

"Now, the fee an investigator could expect from a governess, even one in full employment, could scarcely be more than a few shillings, yet when two weeks later Miss Hunter wired 'Please be at the Black Swan Hotel at Winchester at mid-day tomorrow,' Holmes dropped everything and sprang into the 9:30 train."

Adrian Mulliner paused and chuckled softly. "You see where all this is heading?"

I said No, I didn't. I was the only one there, and had to say something.

"Tut, tut, man, you know my methods. Apply them. Why is a man casual about money?"

"Because he has a lot of it."

"Precisely."

"But you said Holmes hadn't."

"I said nothing of the sort. That was merely the illusion he was trying to create."

"Why?"

"Because he needed a front for his true activities. Sherlock Holmes had no need to worry about fees. He was pulling in the stuff in sackfuls from another source. Where is the big money? Where has it always been? In crime. Bags of it, and no income tax. If you want to salt away a few million for a rainy day you don't spring into 9:30 trains to go and see governesses; you become a Master Criminal, sitting like a spider in the center of its web and egging your corps of assistants on to steal jewels and naval treaties."

"You mean—"

"Exactly. He was Professor Moriarty."

"What was that name again?"

"Professor Moriarty."

"The bird with the reptilian head?"

"That's right."

"But Holmes hadn't a reptilian head."

"Nor had Moriarty."

"Holmes said he had."

"And to whom? To Watson. So as to get the description given publicity. Watson never saw Moriarty. All he knew about him was what Holmes told him. Well, that's the story, old man."

"The whole story?"

"Yes."

"There isn't any more?"

"No."

I chuckled softly.

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a NEW short story by

RUTH RENDELL

He first saw her under melodramatic circumstances. It was inevitable they would meet, and when she proved to be gentle and quiet, exquisitely feminine yet unobtrusively efficient—well, he realized she was quite perfect . . .

THE CLINGING WOMAN

by RUTH RENDELL

The girl was hanging by her hands from the railing of a balcony. The balcony was on the twelfth floor of the high-rise next to his. His apartment was on the ninth floor and he had to look up to see her. It was half-past six in the morning.

He had been awakened by the sound of an airplane flying dangerously low overhead and had got out of bed to look. His sleepy gaze, descending from the blue sky which was empty of clouds, empty of anything but the bright vanishing arrow of the aircraft, alighted—at first with disbelief—on the hanging figure.

He really thought he must be dreaming, for this sunrise time was the hour for dreams. Then, when he knew he wasn't, he decided it must be a stunt. This was to be a scene in a film. There would be cameramen down there, a whole film unit, and all the correct safety precautions would have been taken. Probably the girl wasn't even a real girl, only a dummy.

He opened the window and looked down. The parking lot, paved courts, grass spaces between the buildings, all were deserted. On the balcony rail one of the dummy's hands moved, clutching its anchorage more tightly, more desperately. He had to believe then what was obviously happening —unbelievable only because melodrama, though a frequent constituent of real life, always is.

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The girl was trying to kill herself. She had lost her nerve and was now trying to stay alive. All these thoughts and conclusions occupied about thirty seconds. Then he acted. He picked up the phone and dialed the emergency number of the police.

The arrival of the police cars and the ultimate rescue of the girl became the focus of gossip and speculation for the tenants of the two apartment houses. Someone found out it was he who had alerted the police and he became an unwilling hero. He was a modest, quiet young man, and, disliking this limelight, was relieved when the talk began to die down, when the novelty of it wore off, and he was able to enter and leave his apartment without being pointed at as a kind of St. George and sometimes even congratulated.

About two weeks after that morning of melodrama he was getting ready to go to the theater, just putting on his overcoat, when the doorbell rang. He didn't recognize the girl who stood outside. He had never seen her face.

She said, "I'm Lydia Simpson. You saved my life. I've come to thank you."

His embarrassment was acute. "You shouldn't have," he said with a nervous smile. "You really shouldn't. That's not at all necessary. I only did what anyone would have done."

She was calm and tranquil, not at all his idea of a failed suicide. "But no one else did," she said.

"Won't you come in? Have a drink or something?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't think of it. I can see you're just going out. I only wanted to say thank you very, very much."

"It was nothing."

"Nothing to save someone's life? I'll always be grateful to you."

He wished she would either come in or go away. If this went on much longer the people in the other two apartments on his floor would hear, would come out, and another of those bravest-deeds-of-the-year committee meetings would be convened. "Nothing at all," he said desperately. "Really, I've almost forgotten it."

"I shall never forget, never."

Her manner, calm yet intense, made him feel uncomfortable and with profound relief he watched her retreat into the elevator, smiling pensively. Luckily they weren't likely to meet again. The curious thing was that they did, the next morning at the bus stop. She didn't refer again to his saving her life, but talked instead about her new job, the reason

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for her being at this bus stop at this hour. It turned out that her employer had offices in the City street next to his own and was a client of his own firm.

They traveled to work together. He left her with very different feelings from those of the evening before. It was hard to believe she was 30—his neighbors had given him this information—for she looked much younger, small and fragile as she was, her skin very white and her hair very fair.

They got into the habit of traveling on that bus together in the mornings, and sometimes she waved to him from her balcony. One evening they met by chance outside her office. She was carrying an armful of files to work on at home and confessed she wouldn't have brought them if she had known how heavy they were. Of course he carried them for her all the way up to her apartment and stayed for a drink. She said she was going to cook dinner and would he stay for that, too? He stayed.

While she was in the kitchen he took his drink out onto the balcony. It gave him a strange feeling, imagining her coming out here in her despair at dawn, lowering herself from the railing, then losing her nerve, beneath her a great space with death at the bottom of it. When she came back from the kitchen, he noticed afresh how slight and frail she was, how much in need of protection.

The apartment was neat and spotlessly clean. Most of the girls he knew lived in semi-squalor. Liberated independent creatures, holding down men's jobs, they scorned womanly skills as debasing. He had been carefully brought up by a house-proud mother and he liked a clean home. Lydia's furniture was beautifully polished. He thought that if he were ever asked to dinner again he would remember to bring her flowers for those sparkling glass vases.

After dinner, an excellent, even elaborate meal, he said suddenly, the food and drink lowering his inhibitions, "Why did you do it?"

"Try to kill myself?" She spoke softly and evenly, as serenely as if he had asked why she had changed her job. "I was engaged and he left me for someone else. There didn't seem anything to live for."

"Are you over that now?"

"Oh, yes. I'm glad I didn't succeed. Or—should I say?—that you didn't let me succeed."

"Don't ever try that again, will you?"

"No, why should I?"

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He felt strangely happy that she had promised never to try that again. "You must have dinner with me," he said as he was leaving. "Let's see. Not Monday. How about—?"

"We don't have to arrange it now, do we? We'll see each other in the morning."

She had a very sweet smile. He didn't like aggressive, self-reliant women. Lydia never wore trousers or minidresses, but long flowing skirts, flower-patterned. When he put his hand under her elbow to shepherd her across the street, she clutched his arm and kept hold of it.

"You choose for me," she said when the menu was given to her in the restaurant.

She didn't smoke or drink anything stronger than sweet white wine. She couldn't drive a car. He wondered sometimes how she managed to hold down an exacting job, pay her rent, live alone. She was so exquisitely feminine, so clinging and gentle. And he was flattered when because of the firm's business he was unable to see her one night, tears appeared in her large gray eyes. That was the first time in three weeks they hadn't met daily and he missed her so much he knew he must be in love with her.

She accepted his proposal, made formally and accompanied by a huge bunch of red roses. "Of course I'll marry you. My life has been yours ever since you saved it. I've always felt I belonged to you."

They were married very quietly. Lydia didn't like the idea of a big wedding. He and she were ideally suited, they had so many tastes in common—a love of quietness and order, rather old-fashioned ways, steadiness, regular habits. They had the same aims—a house in a northwestern suburb, two children. But for the time being she would continue to work.

It amazed and delighted him that she managed to keep the new house so well, to provide him every morning with freshly laundered underwear and shirt, every night with a perfectly cooked meal. He hadn't been so well looked after since he had left his mother's house. That, he thought, was how a woman should be, unobtrusively efficient, gentle yet expert, feminine and sweet yet accomplished. The house was run as smoothly as if a couple of silent invisible maids were at work in it all day.

To perform these chores she got up each morning at six. He suggested they get a cleaning woman but she wouldn't hear of it, resisting him without defiance but in a way which was

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bound to appeal to him.

"I couldn't bear to let any other woman look after your things, darling."

She was quite perfect.

They went to work together, lunched together, came home together, ate together, watched television or listened to music or read in companionable silence together, slept together. On weekends they were together all the time. Both had decided their home must be fully equipped with washers and driers and freezers and mixers and cleaners and polishers, beautifully furnished with the brand-new or the extreme antique, so on Saturdays they shopped together.

He adored it. This was what marriage should be, this was what the church service meant—one flesh, forsaking all other. He had, in fact, forsaken most of the people he had once known. Lydia wasn't a very sociable woman and had no women friends. He asked her why not.

"Women," she said, "only want to know other women to gossip about their men. I haven't any complaints against my man, darling."

His own friends seemed a little overawed by the grandeur and pomp with which she entertained them, by the finger bowls and fruit knives. Or perhaps they were put off by her long silences and the way she kept glancing at her watch. It was only natural, of course, that she didn't want people staying half the night. She wanted to be alone with him. They might have understood that and made allowances.

His clients and their wives weren't overawed. They must have been gratified. Where else, in a private house with no help, would they have been given a five-course dinner, exquisitely cooked and served? Naturally Lydia had to spend all the predinner time in the kitchen and, naturally too, she was exhausted after dinner, a little snappy with the man who spilt coffee on their new carpet, and the other one, a pleasant if tactless stockbroker, who tried to persuade him to go away on a stag, golfing weekend.

"Why did they get married," she asked, with some reason, "if all they want to do is get away from their wives?"

By this time, at the age of 34, he ought to have had promotion at work. He'd been with the firm for six years and expected to be made a director. Neither he nor Lydia could understand why this directorship was so slow in coming.

"I wonder," he said, "if it's because I don't hang around in the office drinking after work?"

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"Surely they understand a married man wants to be home with his wife?"

"God knows. Maybe I ought to have gone on that riverboat party, only wives weren't invited, if you remember. I could tell you were unhappy at the idea of my going alone."

In any case he'd probably been quite wrong about the reason for his lack of promotion because, just as he was growing really worried about it, he got his directorship, an increase in salary, a private office, and a secretary of his own. He was a little concerned about other duties of the job, particularly about the possibility of foreign trips. But there was no need to mention these to Lydia yet. Instead he mentioned the secretary he must engage.

"That's marvelous, darling." They were dining out to celebrate. Lydia hadn't cared for his idea of a party. "I'll have to give a fortnight's notice, but you can wait a fortnight, can't you? It'll be lovely being together all day long."

"I don't quite follow," he said, though he did.

"Darling, you *are* slow tonight. Where could you find a better secretary than me?"

They had been married four years. "You're going to give up work and have a baby."

She took his hand, smiling up into his face. "That can wait. We don't need children to bring us together. You're my husband and my child and my friend all in one, and that's enough for me."

He had to tell her why it wouldn't do for her to be his secretary. It was all true, that stuff about office politics and favoritism and the awkwardness of his position if his wife worked for him; but he made a poor show of explaining.

She said in her small soft voice, "Please can we go? Could you ask them for the bill? I'd like to leave now."

As soon as they were in the house she began to cry. He advanced afresh his explanation. She cried. He said she could ask other people. Everyone would tell her the same. A director of a small firm like his couldn't have his wife working for him. She could phone his chairman if she didn't believe him.

She didn't raise her voice. She was never wild or hysterical. "You don't want me," she said like a rejected child.

"I do want you. I love you. But—can't you see?—this is for work, this is different." He knew, before he said it, that he shouldn't have gone on. "You don't like my friends and I've given them up. I don't have my clients here any more. I'm only

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away from you about eight hours out of every day. Isn't all that enough for you?"

There was no argument. She simply repeated that he didn't want her. She cried for most of the night and in the morning she was too tired to go to work. During the day he phoned her twice. She sounded tearful but calm, apparently resigned now. The first thing he noticed when he let himself in his front door at six was the stench of gas.

She was lying on the kitchen floor, a cushion at the edge of the open oven to support her delicate blonde head. Her face was flushed a warm pink.

He flung open the window and carried her to it, holding her head in the fresh air. She was alive, she would be all right. As her pulse steadied and she began to breathe more evenly, he found himself kissing her passionately, begging her aloud not to die, to live for him.

When he thought it was safe to leave her for a moment, he put her on the sofa and dialed the emergency number for an ambulance.

They kept her in the hospital for a few days and there was talk of mental treatment. She refused to undergo it.

"I've never done it except when I've known I'm not loved," she said.

"What do you mean, 'never,' darling?"

"When I was seventeen I took an overdose of pills because a boy rejected me."

"You never told me," he said.

"I didn't want to upset you. I'd rather die than make you unhappy. My life belongs to you and I only want to make yours happy."

Suppose he hadn't got there in time? He shuddered when he thought of that possibility. The house was horrible without her. He missed her painfully, and he resolved to devote even more time and attention to her in future.

She didn't like going away on vacation. Because they never took vacations and seldom entertained now and had no children, they had been able to save. They sold the house and bought a bigger, newer one. His firm wanted him to go to Canada for three weeks and he didn't hesitate. He refused immediately.

An up-and-coming junior got the Canada trip. It irritated him when he learned of a rumor that was going around the office to the effect that his wife was some sort of invalid, just because she had given up work since they had bought the new house. Lydia, an invalid? She was happier than she had ever been, filling the house

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with new things, redecorating rooms herself, having the garden landscaped.

If either of them was sick, it was he. He hadn't been sleeping well lately and had become subject to fits of depression. The doctor gave him pills for the insomnia and advised a change of air. Perhaps he was working too hard. Couldn't he manage to do some of his work at home?

"I took it upon myself," Lydia said gently, "to phone the doctor and suggest that. You could have two or three days a week at home and I'd do the secretarial work for you."

His chairman agreed to it. There was a hint of scorn in the man's smile, he thought. But he was allowed to work at home, and sometimes for four or five days at a stretch, although he talked to people on the phone, he saw no one at all but his wife. She was, he found, as perfect a secretary as a wife. There was scarcely anything for him to do.

She composed his press releases, wrote his letters without his having to dictate them, answered the phone with efficiency and charm, arranged his office appointments. And she waited on him unflaggingly when work was done. No meals on trays for them. Every lunchtime and every evening the dining table was exquisitely laid, and if it occurred to him that in the past two years only six other people had handled this glass, this cutlery, this china, he didn't say so.

His depression wouldn't go away, even though he took tranquilizers now as well as sleeping pills. They never spoke of her suicide attempts, but he often thought of them and wondered if he had somehow been infected by this tendency of hers. When, before settling down for the night, he dropped one pill from the bottle out into the palm of his hand, the temptation to let them all trickle out, to swallow them all with a draft of fresh cold water, was sometimes great. He didn't know why, for he had everything a man could want—a perfect marriage, a beautiful house, a good job, excellent physical health, and no restrictions.

As Lydia had pointed out, "Children would have been such a tie, darling," or when he suggested they might buy a dog, "Pets are an awful bother, and they ruin one's home." He agreed that this home and these comforts were what he had always wanted. Yet, as he approached 40, he began to have bad dreams, and the dreams were of prisons.

One day he said to her, "I can understand now why you tried

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to kill yourself. I mean, I can understand that anyone might want to."

"I think we understand each other perfectly in every way," she said. "But don't let's talk about it. I'll never attempt it again."

"And I'm not the suicidal type, am I?"

"You?" She wasn't alarmed, she didn't take him seriously. It was strange and quite irrational, the feeling he suddenly had that she never took him seriously, never thought of him at all as a person except in relation to herself. At once he reproached himself. Lydia? Lydia, who had given over her whole life to him, who put his every need and wish before her own? "You wouldn't have any reason to," she said gaily. "You know you're loved. Besides, I should rescue you in time, just as you rescued me."

His company had expanded and was planning to open an office in Melbourne. After he had denied hotly that his wife was an invalid, that there was "some little trouble" with his wife, the chairman offered him the chance to go to Australia for three months to get the new branch on its feet. Again he didn't hesitate. He accepted. The firm would, of course, pay for his trip.

He was working out, as he entered his house, how much Lydia's air fare to Melbourne, her board in a hotel, her expenses, would amount to. Suicidal thoughts retreated. He could do it, he could just manage it. Three months away, he thought, in a new country, meeting new people, and at the end of it, praise for his work and maybe an increase of salary.

She came out into the hall and embraced him. Her embraces at parting and greeting (though these occasions were no longer frequent) were as passionate now as when they had first got engaged. He anticipated a small difficulty in that she wouldn't much want to leave her home, but that could be resolved. She would go, as she had often said, anywhere with him.

He walked into their huge living room. It was as immaculate as ever, but something was different, something had undergone a great change. Their red carpet had been replaced by a new one of a delicate creamy velvety pile.

"Do you like it?" she asked, smiling. "I bought it and had it laid secretly as a surprise for you. Oh, darling, you *do* like it?"

"I like it," he said, and then, "How much did it cost?"

This was a question he

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hardly ever asked, but now he had reason to. She named a sum, about the figure her trip to Australia would have cost.

"We said we were saving it to get something for the house," she said, putting her arm round him. "It's not really an extravagance. It'll last forever. And what else have we got to spend the money on but our own home?"

He kissed her and said it didn't matter. It wasn't really an extravagance and it would last forever, forever . . .

They dined off Copenhagen china and Georgian silver and Waterford glass. On the table flowers were arranged, wasting their sweetness on the desert air. He must go to Australia, but she couldn't come with him. He was afraid to tell her, gripped by a deep fear.

For weeks he put off telling her, and treacherously the idea came to him—why tell her at all? He longed to go, he must go. Couldn't he simply escape, phone her from the aircraft's first stop, somewhere in Europe, and say he had been sent unexpectedly, without notice, urgently? He had tried to phone her before he left but he couldn't get through.

She wouldn't attempt suicide, he was sure, if she knew he was too far away to save her. And she'd forgive him.

But there were too many practical difficulties—clothes, for instance, luggage. He must have been losing his mind even to think of it. Do that to *Lydia*? He wouldn't do that to his worst enemy, still less to his beloved wife.

As it turned out, he didn't get the chance. She was his secretary from whom a man, however many he keeps from his wife, can have no secrets. The airline phoned with a query and she found out.

"How long," she asked dully, "will you be gone?"

"Three months."

She paled. She fell back as if physically ill.

"I'll write every day. I'll phone."

"Three months," she said.

"I was scared stiff to tell you. I have to go. Darling, don't you see I *have* to? It would cost hundreds and hundreds to take you with me, and we don't have the money."

"No," she said. "No, of course not."

She cried bitterly that night but on the following morning she didn't refer to his departure. They worked together as efficiently and companionably as ever, but her face was paper-white. Work finished, she began to talk of the clothes he would need, the new suitcases to be bought. In a sad monoton-

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ous voice she said that she would take care of everything, he mustn't worry his head at all about the preparations.

"And you won't worry about *me* on the flight?"

There was something about the way she said she wouldn't, shaking her head and smiling as if his question had been preposterous, unreal, that told him. The dead cannot worry. She intended to be dead. And he understood that he had been absurdly optimistic in reassuring himself she wouldn't attempt suicide when he was far away.

The days went by. Only one more to go before he was due to leave. But he wouldn't leave. He knew that. He had known it for more than a week, and he was as afraid to tell his chairman he wouldn't as he had been afraid to tell her he would. Again he dreamed of prisons. He awoke to see his life as alternating between fear and captivity, fear and imprisonment.

The escape route from both was available. It was on the afternoon of the last day that he decided to take it. He had told neither his wife nor his chairman that he wasn't going to Australia, and everything was packed, his luggage arranged in the hall with a precision of which only Lydia was capable. She had told him she was going out to fetch his best lightweight suit from the cleaners, the suit he was to wear on the following day, and he had heard the front door close.

That had been half an hour before. While she was out he was to go upstairs, she had instructed him sadly and tenderly, and check that there was no vital item she had left unpacked.

And at last he went, but for another purpose. A lethal, not a vital, item was what he wanted—the bottle of sleeping pills.

The bedroom door was closed. He opened it and saw her lying on their bed. She hadn't gone out. For half an hour she had been lying there, the empty bottle of pills still clutched feebly in her hand.

He felt her pulse, and a firm but unsteady flicker passed into his fingers. She was alive. Another quarter of an hour, say, and the ambulance would have her in the hospital.

He reached for the phone extension and put out his finger to dial the emergency number. She'd be saved. Thank God, once again, he wasn't too late.

He looked down at her peaceful, tranquil face. She looked no older than on that day when she had come to him to thank him for saving her life. Gradu-

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ally, almost involuntarily, he withdrew his finger from the dial.

A heavy sob almost choked him and he heard himself give a whimpering cry. He lifted her in his arms, kissing her passionately and speaking her name aloud over and over.

Then he let her fall back on the bed and walked quickly out of that room and out of the house. A bus came. He got on it and bought a ticket to a distant, outlying suburb. There, in a park he didn't know and had never visited before, he lay on the grass and fell into a deep undrugged sleep.

When he awoke it was nearly dark. He looked at his watch and understood that by now the prison gates must have opened. Wiping his eyes, for he had apparently cried in his sleep, he got up and went home.

"Q"

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a NEW Interpol story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

This is the sixth adventure of Sebastian Blue and Laura Charme, our favorite Interpol investigators, and again they become involved in a bizarre crime . . . Finish the opening scene, and if you can stop reading, our hat's off to you . . .

INTERPOL: The Case of the Broken Wings

by EDWARD D. HOCH

Willy Tract awoke in a strange bed, with only a vague memory of what had gone before. As he struggled to sit up he became aware of the layers of bandage around his chest and the gentle fuzziness of his brain. He opened his eyes fully and realized he was in a hospital room, the tiny sort of private room frequently found in provincial French clinics.

He had suffered an injury of some sort, an injury to his chest, but he had no memory of the circumstances. He'd been having a drink, and then—?

With some effort he managed to reach the button at the side of the bed. He pressed it, summoning the nurse—a young French girl with a quick smile.

"Mr. Tract! How are we feeling this morning?"

"What's wrong with me? What am I doing here?"

"Don't you remember? You were shot in the chest. A bad wound, close to the heart."

"Who shot me?"

"I wouldn't know that. Dr. Felix brought you in last night, heavily sedated. Perhaps he can tell you the details."

"Is he here? May I see him?"

"Not right now. He's not on our staff. But I expect he'll be dropping by to see you before the day is over. They must decide about the operation."

"Operation?"

"To remove the bullet. They'll want to x-ray you to pinpoint its exact location."

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He closed his eyes. "I see."

"You seem much stronger than I'd have expected. Can I get you anything?"

"No. Nothing."

"There's water by your bedside. Ring if you're uncomfortable."

After she'd gone, Willy Tract opened his eyes and stared out the window at the bleak winter landscape. The scene was unfamiliar, and he wondered if he was still in Tours. But it made little difference at the moment. The important thing was his wound, and his recovery.

He tried shifting his legs, and was relieved that they seemed to function normally. His arms also responded well. As the mist cleared from his brain he realized he could feel no pain in his chest or abdomen—nothing but the uncomfortable tightness of the bandage. He experimented gingerly by pressing on the bandage over the wound, but still there was no pain.

After a half hour of pressing and probing he reached an inescapable conclusion—not only was there no pain in the area of the wound, there was no wound at all beneath the bandage. He began to unwind it, finally lifting the adhesive tape and gauze pads to reveal his unmarked chest. Some terrible mistake had been made!

His first reaction was one of relief, but this was replaced by a growing anger that such a thing could happen, and to him! It would make quite a story for his editor in Berlin.

He heard a noise at the door and pulled the covers up over his bare chest. It was not the nurse this time, but a man with a small black bag. He smiled at Willy and said, "Ah, Mr. Tract! Feeling better today, I trust. I was surprised when the nurse told me you were conscious."

"You're Dr. Felix?"

"Yes. I was able to render immediate service after your injury last night and had you admitted here."

"Exactly how was I injured?"

"A gunshot wound in the chest. An inch to the left would have been fatal." He'd set his black bag on the edge of the bed and was opening it.

"Really? Now that is odd, Doctor, because I've just removed the bandage and there's no wound under it. No wound at all!"

Dr. Felix leaned forward to peer at his naked chest, suddenly exposed by the dropping sheet. "Well! That's certainly amazing!" He returned to his bag. "But I have something here for it."

Willy Tract saw the silenced pistol come up out of the bag. He had time for one soft gasp

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before Dr. Felix shot him once through the heart.

Sebastian Blue was feeling old. The French climate in mid-winter was little better than Britain's, and he'd reached an age when one longed for the sun. Seated now opposite young George Longval, he was reminded of his own youth, of how he'd felt in the days before his marriage. The marriage itself was ended, but for Sebastian the memory lingered on.

"I want to *marry* the girl," Longval was saying. "I don't want both our lives ruined by this thing!" He was an intense young man in his late twenties, with curly black hair and a way of emphasizing some of the words he spoke. He'd driven up from Tours that morning.

"You believe Interpol should investigate the Broken Wings?" Sebastian asked, sipping his tea.

"An investigation is *certainly* called for. They told me you were in charge of airline crimes—"

"An organization of former stewardesses suspected of international prostitution hardly qualifies as an airline crime," Sebastian pointed out. He was silently cursing the Secretary General for sending Longval to him in the first place.

"It's *my* girl, though! Angela doesn't know what she's gotten herself into! By the time she finds out it may be too late."

"Very well," Sebastian said. "If these girls are operating across international boundaries as you claim, the matter is certainly of interest to Interpol."

"You'll look into it? Right *away*?"

"We'll look into it," Sebastian promised. He saw George Longval to the door and shook his hand. Then he walked down the hall to the little office occupied by Laura Charme.

She looked up from her desk, smiled, and asked, "Are we lunching together today?"

He'd been working with Laura for more than a year, and though he was old enough to be her father his feelings had grown less paternal with each passing month. "You ask me every day."

"That's because you so rarely say yes."

"I wish I had the time, Laura. Duty, you know."

"Rubbish!"

"Agreed," he said with a sigh. "But I have a job for you. Ever hear of the Broken Wings?"

"Certainly. Many former stewardesses in England and France belong to it. There's an older, larger organization, too, but the Broken Wings seems to attract the younger women."

"A Frenchman named George

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Longval just came in with an odd story. His fiancée, Angela Cardman, recently left the airlines when they cut back their flights during the fuel crisis. Since they're to be married in the spring she doesn't plan on returning to work, and she joined the Broken Wings some weeks back. According to Longval she's been acting strangely ever since. She's been away on two unexplained weekend trips and has received long-distance phone calls from men. Longval thinks the Broken Wings is a front for some sort of international prostitution ring."

Laura laughed. "And I'm to pose as a former stewardess and join their ranks?"

"I have put you through a great deal in the past, haven't I?"

"You have."

"Just do a routine inquiry this time—ask a few questions. I'm sure there's nothing to it."

"And lunch?"

"Tomorrow for sure."

Laura found Angela Cardman at her apartment on the Rue Royale. She was a handsome woman who wore her blonde hair long and straight, and though she may have looked her age at 28, it was a regal 28.

"I understand you were a stewardess with BEA."

"That's correct," she answered. "What can I do for you?"

Laura produced her identification. "We're conducting a routine investigation of international clubs and societies. I understand you recently became a member of the Broken Wings."

Angela Cardman moved out of the doorway to let Laura enter. "I can only give you a few minutes. Why is the Broken Wings a concern of Interpol?"

Laura settled herself onto a low sofa. "As I said, it's merely routine. What can you tell me about the organization?"

"It was started a few years back in London. Membership now is about sixty women, with chapters in London and Paris. Our aims are mainly social, to keep in touch. The president this year is Renée Du Bois."

"Are you active with the club?"

"I only joined a month ago, but I've been traveling for them, recruiting new members. There are so many women out of work right now, with the flight cutbacks . . ." Her voice trailed off as she eyed Laura with newfound suspicion. "Did George Longval put you up to this?"

"George who?" Laura asked innocently.

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"The man I'm engaged to. He does some sort of prison work, and sometimes he thinks every other person is criminal. My God, I go off to London for a weekend to recruit for the Wings and he thinks I'm having an affair with someone!"

"I don't know about that," Laura said. "My main interest at Interpol is in activities like smuggling. As you must know, a great many stewardesses are recruited into smuggling operations of one sort or another —diamonds, drugs, gold."

"I never was." She'd regained her coolness and once more took charge of the conversation. "If you really want information on the Broken Wings, you should talk to Renée Du Bois. Or better yet, to Willy Tract."

Laura noted the names. "Who is Willy Tract?"

"A writer for a German newsmagazine—one of those crime-and-scandal things. George got him to do an article on the Broken Wings."

"Do you have his address?"

"No, but Renée knows how to reach him. I can put you in touch with her."

"That would help," Laura said. She could see there was nothing more to be learned from Angela Cardman—at least, for the present.

Renée DuBois proved to be a different sort entirely. Looking barely out of her teens, the president of the Broken Wings was a flighty dark-haired girl full of nervous energy. "Interpol? I used to watch you on television!"

"Not me," Laura corrected. "Look, I've already been to see Angela Cardman, and—"

"Nice girl, very intelligent. But that boy friend of hers! Did she tell you what he did to us?"

"She mentioned a German newsman named Willy Tract."

"Exactly! A sweet man, really, but he's causing us no end of trouble! His editor sent him to France last month to do a series on the French executioners of the last two centuries —lots of old prints of guillotines and such for their bloodthirsty readers. Well, Angela's fiancé got some wild idea about our group. He telephoned Willy Tract in Tours and told him he should do a story on us. Can you imagine that?"

"Do you have Tract's address in Tours?"

"A hotel. I have the name somewhere." After a few moments of search she found it in her desk. "He came up to Paris to interview me, but I'm afraid I disappointed him. I think he expected airborne orgies."

Laura took the name of the hotel and left. Renée DuBois hardly seemed the type to be

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mixed up in a prostitution ring. Sebastian was probably right that the investigation would turn up nothing. She found a phone booth and placed a long-distance call to the hotel in Tours. When she had the registration desk she asked, "Is Willy Tract staying there?"

The somber-voiced room clerk didn't need to check. "I'm sorry, but Mr. Tract met with an accident two nights ago. I believe he succumbed at a local hospital yesterday."

"Succumbed? You mean he died?"

"I have no details. Sorry." He hung up and Laura was left holding the receiver. She looked at it, made a face, and hung up herself.

When she entered Sebastian's office a half hour later, he glanced up in surprise. "Back so soon?"

"I wondered if you wanted to drive down to Tours with me."

"Now? This afternoon?"

"Right now. It's that case you put me on."

Sebastian Blue chuckled. "Do you mean there really is an international prostitution ring?"

"I don't know, but there's something. A German reporter doing a story on the Broken Wings died yesterday in Tours. The police there say the cause of death was a gunshot wound. It's listed as a homicide."

"You may have something," Sebastian admitted. "Give me ten minutes to finish this letter and I'll come along."

During the drive to Tours, Sebastian listened to Laura's detailed account of her meetings with Angela Cardman and Renée DuBois. His admiration for her investigative techniques was equaled only by his respect for her as a woman. At times like this, seated in the front seat of her little Renault, he found himself wondering what it would be like to be married to Laura. She was so much unlike his first wife that he could not even imagine the experience. Could not, and would not. He was over 50 now, and too old for such thoughts.

Still it was nice to be next to her like this.

"I've never been to Tours," he said as the city loomed up before them, nestled in the valley of the Loire River.

"What can I tell you about it? Charles Martel defeated the Saracens nearby in 732. And it was the temporary French capital in 1870 and again in 1940. Balzac was born here, and Louis XI died here. Its population is nearly 100,000; wine and milk are its chief products."

"Enough!" He held up a hand. "On matters French you're a walking encyclopedia."

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"Not really," she confessed with a chuckle. "When I worked in Interpol's translating section, I filled my spare time reading guidebooks."

She parked in front of the hospital where Willy Tract had died. Inside they could learn very little, except that the cause of death had been a bullet wound in the chest. "Where did the shooting occur?" Sebastian asked.

"I wouldn't know," the gruff-voiced doctor answered. He was a burly Frenchman named de Gris, obviously annoyed at these questions which interrupted his routine.

"Did you examine him?"

"It was in the middle of the night. Dr. Felix had already treated the wound and sedated the patient. There was no need for examination beyond a routine check of pulse and blood pressure. He was conscious the next morning and spoke to the nurse, but then he died quite suddenly."

"Was an autopsy performed?"

Dr. deGris removed his glasses and wiped the lenses. "Since there was a crime involved, the autopsy was performed by the city. You'll have to obtain the information from the authorities."

Sebastian thanked the doctor and they drove into the center of Tours, seeking out the local equivalent of a coroner's office. After a few questions and some winding through the old city streets, they found the place they sought, in a building within the shadow of the Tours Cathedral.

The man they sought was Dr. Jeune, who was not nearly as young as his name suggested. He peered at Sebastian's identification through steel-rimmed glasses and said, "Yes, I performed the autopsy on Willy Tract. But I know nothing of the circumstances of the shooting. I was merely presented with a body."

"What was the exact cause of death?"

"A bullet passing through the left ventricle of the heart. I removed it from the body, if you'd care to see it."

Sebastian bent to examine the slug, but it was not unique. He'd seen hundreds like it during his years with Scotland Yard. Perhaps he was wasting Interpol's time even being here. He had no investigative powers in French internal affairs, and there was still nothing to link Tract's murder to the Broken Wings. Had he come here only as an excuse to spend an afternoon with Laura?

". . . killed him instantly?" Laura was asking the doctor. Sebastian brought his thoughts back to the present.

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"Most certainly," Dr. Jeune agreed. "Death would have been instantaneous from such a wound in the heart."

Sebastian interrupted, catching the drift of the conversation. "But Tract was shot the night before he died! He actually regained consciousness and spoke to his nurse!"

The doctor smiled as if they were perpetrating some huge joke on him. "But that would have been impossible, wouldn't it? If he lived through the night with his wound, it would have made medical history."

Back on the street Laura asked, "Do you want to see the Cathedral while we're here? Some of these places were damaged in the war, but—"

"I'd be more interested in seeing Dr. Felix."

"He's not in the phone book?"

"Not under that name. And Dr. Jeune never heard of him. Still, he must have had some sort of medical credentials to get his patient admitted to the hospital."

"You think someone killed Willy Tract in the hospital?"

"There's no other explanation."

"Wouldn't the nurses have heard the shot?"

"Not with a silencer, or a pillow over the barrel."

"Wouldn't they *know*?"

"Not if the wound was similar to the one he was already supposed to have. Remember, no one examined it earlier. This mysterious Dr. Felix could have shot him and simply said the wound reopened and started bleeding again. In a small hospital like that one it's doubtful his word would be questioned."

"But why would Felix do that?"

"I don't know," Sebastian admitted. "Let's check at Tract's hotel."

Laura followed him to the car. In five minutes they were at the hotel where Willy Tract had registered. The room clerk told them Tract's belongings had already been picked up for shipment to his family in Germany.

"A man came an hour ago," he said. "The authorities had released the luggage and he was taking it to the express office."

Sebastian held a quick conference with Laura. "What do you think?"

"I could check the freight office, maybe intercept him," she said. "And you could phone Tract's office in Germany to learn what dispatches he might have already filed about the Broken Wings."

"Good idea," Sebastian agreed. "Meet me back here in the lobby."

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Laura drove to the freight office at the railroad station and parked her little car next to a mail truck. Inside the office the freight clerk told her in rapid French that no one had been there during the past hour with luggage bound for Germany. She went back outside, reluctant to admit to a dead end.

Then she noticed a car pull up across the street. A man got out and removed two suitcases from the trunk. She fell in step beside him as he entered the freight office and stood just behind him as he told the clerk, "I want to ship these to Berlin, to this address."

The clerk glanced in her direction but said nothing. She lingered while the man paid the shipping fee in cash, then she followed him out. "Pardon me, sir."

He turned, startled. "What is it?"

"I couldn't help overhearing you. Is that Willy Tract's luggage you were shipping to Berlin?"

"Did you know Willy?"

"Slightly. He once interviewed me."

"His death was a terrible thing," the man said, continuing to walk toward his car.

"The papers only said he died in the hospital following a shooting, but they gave no details."

"Nothing is known," the man said with a shrug. "Someone shot him, that's all. Perhaps it was a Frenchman who still hated Germans."

He opened the door of his car and started to slide in, but Laura wasn't about to lose him that easily. He'd possessed that luggage for more than an hour—long enough to search it and remove whatever he wanted. "Isn't it odd the police released his luggage?" she asked innocently.

"I believe they checked it in routine fashion. Why does it interest you?"

"I was sent down from Paris by his editor, to assist in the investigation. I called at the hotel and learned you'd picked up the luggage ahead of me." It was a good story and it might force his hand.

"Get in," he said. "We'll talk it over."

Laura slid into the front seat as he started the motor. "My name is Laura Charme. Were you a friend of Willy's?"

"Not exactly," he replied. It was then that she noticed the physicians' symbol on his windshield. "But I was with him when he died. My name is Dr. Felix."

While he waited for Laura's return, Sebastian put through a call to Berlin. He spoke briefly

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with Willy Tract's editor, a mild-voiced man named Schuft, but learned little. "He wrote me something about the Broken Wings," the man said, "but that wasn't his main interest. He'd discovered a series of mysterious deaths near Tours and he was looking into them."

"How were they mysterious?"

"I don't know. But he thought he'd have a story for us. A good story, he said."

Sebastian thanked the man and hung up. Next he checked with the local police, but they had no record of mysterious deaths in or near Tours. No mass murders, no sex crimes, nothing. Whatever Tract had been onto, it was well hidden.

He left a message for Laura at the hotel desk and walked the few blocks to the city's Bureau of Records. A bored-looking civil servant was standing behind the counter as Sebastian entered. "Can I be of assistance?"

Sebastian showed his identification. "This is an Interpol matter."

"Interpol?" The man studied the card, comparing the photo with Sebastian's face. "How can I help?"

"I'd like to see your records on recent deaths. Everything for the past year."

"A great many people die in Tours in a year's time."

"I'm sure."

"Auto accidents, old age, a few murders." He started bringing out ledgers. "Do you want deaths from the prison, too? Quite a few die out there, but it's not really within the city limits."

"Let's start with the city. How about the hospital where the German reporter died? Many deaths there?"

"Not an unusual number." He thumbed through the pages. "The reporter is listed separately, of course, because he wasn't a French citizen. Nice man. He was in here last week."

"Willy Tract came here?"

"That's right."

"About some mysterious deaths?"

"No, nothing like that. He was writing a story on genealogy. Wanted to trace a family tree."

Sebastian felt his pulse pounding. "What family?"

"The Sansons. Very famous in French history, you know. Louis-Charles-Martin Sanson was the executioner of Tours for many years, until 1796. Then he moved on to Dijon, I think."

"Executioner," Sebastian repeated. He was remembering a conversation, something that Renée DuBois had told Laura. Willy Tract had been doing an

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article on French executioners.

"We had them then, you know. Still have one, for that matter, up in Paris. Just last year a Tunisian was guillotined for killing a child. It's pretty rare, of course, these days."

"I know," Sebastian said. He was trying to think.

"Sanson's son was an executioner, too. The whole family was, for seven generations. There's a book written about them. That's what interested this man Tract. A grandson of Louis-Charles-Martin returned to Tours in the middle of the last century. Because of the notoriety of the Sanson name, his descendants reverted to the previous family name."

"Would that have been Felix?"

"Felix? No, nothing like that. I have the name here somewhere if you need it."

"I do need it," Sebastian said, though he thought he already knew what it was.

George Longval opened the door on his second ring, looking faintly surprised to see him there. "*Well!* It's Sebastian Blue, isn't it?"

Sebastian nodded and stepped inside. The place was a converted farmhouse on the outskirts of Tours. "I found you in the phone book. Hope you don't mind my stopping by, but I thought you could help the investigation."

"*Glad* to assist!" He motioned Sebastian to a chair in the small, neat living room. "What luck have you had with the Broken Wings?"

"None, I'm afraid. But I've come upon something very interesting. Do you know a reporter named Willy Tract?"

"I've never met him, but I spoke to him on the phone."

"And told him your suspicions of the Broken Wings?"

"Yes. He promised to investigate."

"He was shot two days ago. Murdered."

Longval nodded. "I saw something about it in the newspapers."

"Was that why you came to me? Odd that you didn't mention his death."

"I saw no connection with my problem. You mean there *is* a connection?"

"Between the Broken Wings and Tract's death? No, none at all. But I think there is a connection between you and Tract's death."

At that moment there came a pounding on the ceiling above their heads. Sebastian looked up, startled, and when he dropped his eyes George Longval was covering him with a long-barreled pistol. "Just *stay* in your chair, Blue."

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Sebastian merely smiled as the pounding on the ceiling continued. "I seem to detect a slight change in your voice. And could that be the very weapon you used to operate on poor Tract? Could it, Dr. Felix?"

Longval ran a tongue over his lips. "*Damn* you, how did you find out?"

"That doesn't matter now. The police will be here soon, and you'll hear all about it then."

There was something like madness in Longval's eyes as he raised the pistol. But then, as suddenly as it had started, the pounding on the ceiling ceased. This time it was Longval who looked up, and Sebastian moved faster than he had in years.

He found Laura tied and gagged on the floor of an upstairs bedroom. When he'd freed her, she worked the muscles of her jaw and managed to gasp out her thanks. "What was that shot I heard?"

"It was meant for me, but it went a bit wild," Sebastian told her.

"When I heard your voice I started pounding my feet on the floor. It was the only thing I could think of to do."

"What saved me was when you stopped pounding. Longval thought you'd gotten free. How did he take you without a struggle?"

"I was in his car, and it was too cramped to use judo or karate. He injected me with something. But how did you find me so quickly, Sebastian?"

"I didn't find you, I found Longval. He was from Tours, yet he never mentioned Tract's death to me or that he'd asked him to write a story on the Broken Wings."

"Why did he ask him?"

"Willy Tract was in Tours doing an article on old-time French executioners. He stumbled on a series of odd deaths, probably while inspecting the prison near here. That led him to check into the genealogy of the Sanson family—the traditional executioners of French history. He was getting too close to George Longval's secret, so Longval phoned him and tried to divert him with this story about the Broken Wings. When Tract wouldn't be diverted, Longval killed him. Then he tried to get Interpol onto the Broken Wings for the same reason—to make it look as if Tract's death had been caused by a prostitution ring rather than by Longval himself."

"What was Longval's secret?"

"Tract told his editor he'd uncovered a series of mysterious deaths that would make a great

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story. He was working on the executioner thing at the time, and I learned this afternoon that there'd been quite a few deaths at the prison. Tract was on the verge of discovering that the prison physician, Dr. Felix, had a double identity. He was also George Longval. And Longval was the original family name of the Sansons, the family of French executioners. He couldn't use that name at the prison without running the risk of discovery, so he became Dr. Felix."

"You mean he was killing—?"

"He would have called it executing," Sebastian said. "Carrying on the family tradition. A bit too much of a drug administered to a sick prisoner and who would know the difference? What's more important, who would care?"

"How horrible, Sebastian! But why did he use a gun on Tract instead of his drugs?"

"Tract's death had to look like something entirely different, something unconnected with the prison deaths. Tract had already told his editor about the series of deaths he was investigating, and Longval had no way of knowing what else Tract might have written to his editor."

"He searched his luggage for notebooks," Laura said. "That was why I was able to catch up with him at the freight office."

Sebastian nodded. "I think Longval's original plan was to keep Tract drugged at the hospital for a day or so, till he could move him out of Tours and kill him somewhere else. But like you, Tract regained consciousness too soon and discovered his chest wound was a fake. So Longval-Felix had to kill him in the hospital.

"It was a long chance, but he had to take it; then he had to keep the editor from connecting Tract's death with the executioner story that Tract was working on. If Tract died in Tours, the editor would take up the trail here, and maybe find the same things Tract found. When he was forced to kill Tract in the hospital, it became even more urgent to divert suspicion by blaming the whole thing on his fiancée's club of former stewardesses. So he contacted Interpol."

"But how did you *know* it all, Sebastian?"

"Angela told you Longval suggested the Broken Wings article to Tract. And she also told you he did work with prisoners. When I learned Tract was investigating the Sanson family tree, and that he'd stumbled on a series of mysterious deaths, the prison was the only connecting link. It also

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explained why Felix wasn't known to the doctors in the city. He didn't practice here, and they knew him as George Longval. The clerk at the records office confirmed what I'd already guessed—that Longval was the original name of the Sanson family."

"He must have been mad to be killing those prisoners, Sebastian."

In the distance he could hear the pulsating siren of an approaching police car. "Let's go down and see how he is. I only used my fist on him, and I hope it worked better than the drug he gave you and Willy Tract."

"Q"

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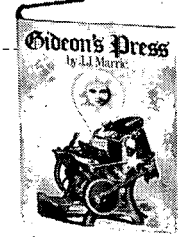

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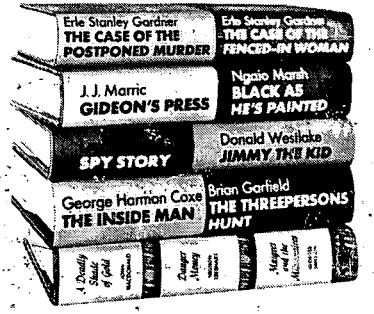

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